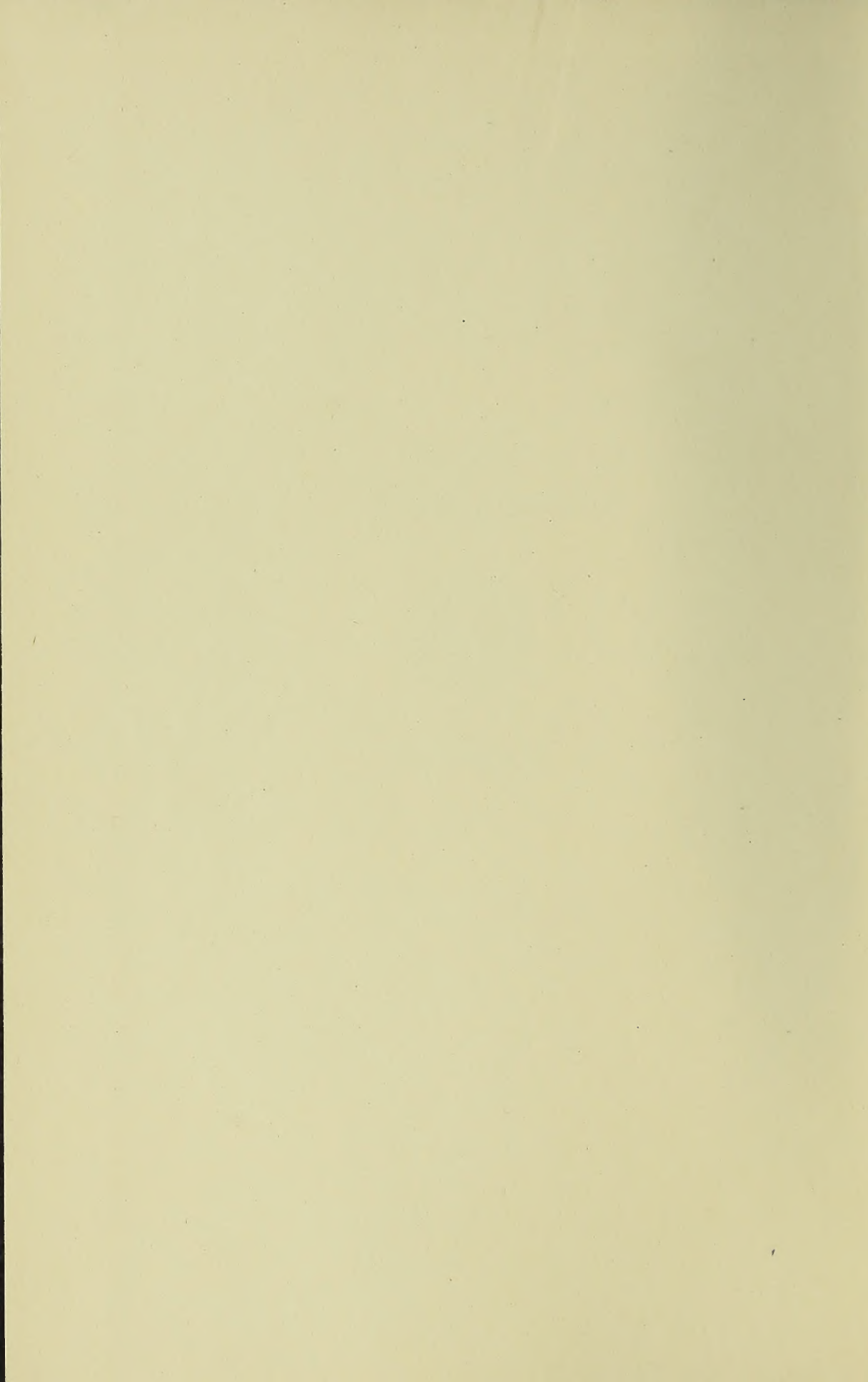


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*A Man in the
Divided Sea*

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A
MAN
IN
THE
DIVIDED
SEA

by
Thomas
Merton

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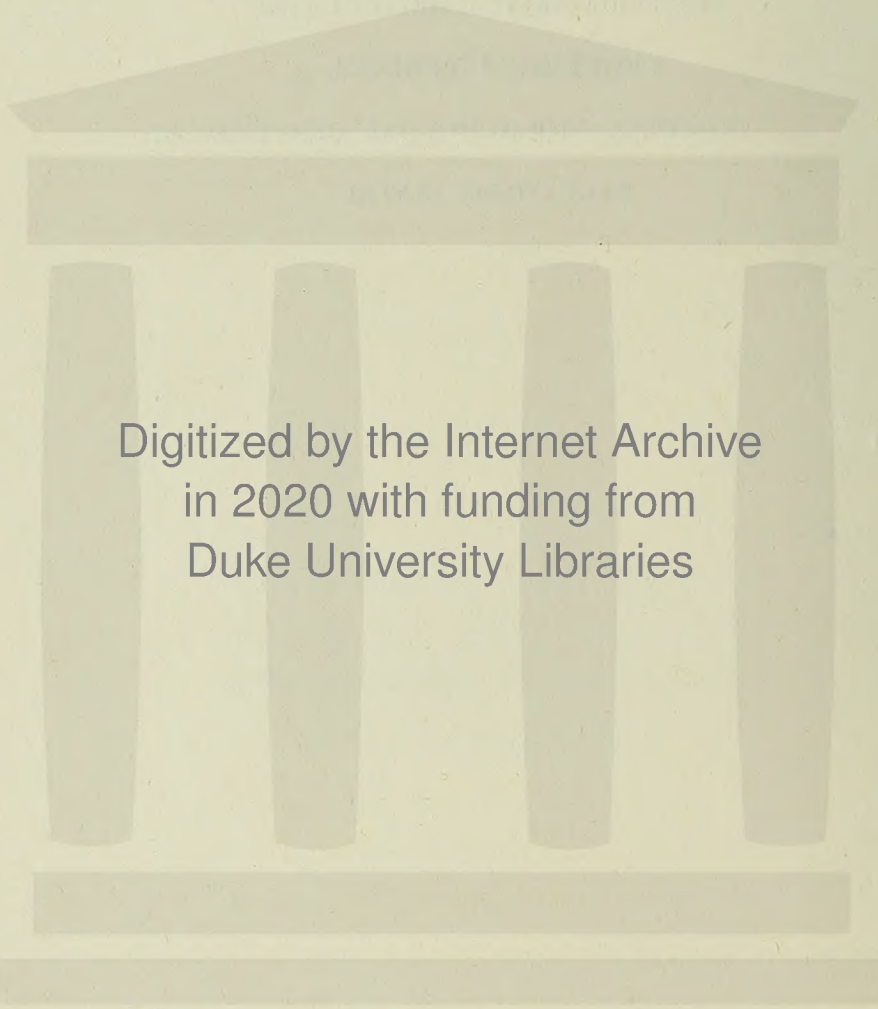
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The following poems are printed more or less in the order in which they were written, over a period of about seven years since the author's conversion to the Catholic faith. Everything written for the last four years of this period was produced in a Trappist monastery, but the rest was written in the world. The "Thirty Poems" reprinted in this book belong partly to the poet's last three years in the world and partly to his first two in the monastery, and are not arranged in any special sequence. The whole book has been passed by two censors of his monastic Order and is printed with the full approval of the Rt. Reverend Abbot of his monastery, under the poet's secular name.

*A Man in the
Divided Sea*

SONG

from Crossportion's Pastoral

The bottom of the sea has come
And builded in my noiseless room
The fishes' and the mermaids' home,

Whose it is most, most hell to be
Out of the heavy-hanging sea
And in the thin, thin changeable air

Or unroom sleep some other where;
But play their coral violins
Where waters most lock music in:

The bottom of my room, the sea.
Full of voiceless curtaindeep
There mermaid somnambules come sleep
Where fluted half-lights show the way,

And there, there lost orchestras play
And down the many quarterlights come
To the dim mirth of my aquadrome:
The bottom of my sea, the room.

POEM : 1939

The white, the silent stars
Drive their wheeling ring,
Crane down out of the tall black air
To hear the swanworld sing.

But the long, deep knife is in,
(O bitter, speechless earth)
Throat grows tight, voice thin,
Blood gets no regrowth,

As night devours our days,
Death puts out our eyes,
Towns dry up and flare like tongues
But no voice prophesies.

THE MAN IN THE WIND

Here is the man who fancies Arab ponies,
Captain April, walking like the wind,
Breeding the happy swordlight of the sun.

Secret, in his looks and manner,
He's not as inattentive to the music as he seems,
That jangles in the empty doorways.

But his well-tempered spirit,
Rapt in the middle of a harmony,
Flies to a breathless wedding with the Palisades.

Then his five senses, separate as their numbers,
Scatter, like birds, from in front of his steps,
And instantly return, like water,
To the common Bermuda of the flashing river.

The mathematics of the air describes a perfect silence,
And Captain April's mind, leaning out of its own
 amazing windows,
Dies in a swirl of doves.

ARIADNE

All through the blazing afternoon
The hand drums talk together like locusts;
The flute pours out its endless, thin stream,
Threading it in and out the clatter of sticks upon
wood-blocks.

Drums and bells exchange handfuls of bright coins,
Drums and bells scatter their music, like pennies,
all over the air,
And see, the lutanist's thin hand
Rapidly picks the spangling notes off from his wires
And throws them about like drops of water.

Behind the bamboo blinds,
Behind the palms,
In the green, sundappled apartments of her palace
Redslipped Ariadne, with a tiny yawn,
Tosses a ball upon her roulette wheel.

Suddenly, dead north,
A Greek ship leaps over the horizon, skips like a colt,
paws the foam.
The ship courses through the pasture of bright
amethysts
And whinnies at the jetty.
The whole city runs to see:
Quick as closing your hand
The racing sail's down.
Then the drums are stunned, and the crowd, exalted,
cries:
O Theseus! O Grecian hero!

Like a thought through the mind
Ariadne moves to the window.
Arrows of light, in every direction,
Leap from the armor of the black-eyed captain.
Arrows of light
Resound within her like the strings of a guitar.

THE ORACLE

The girls with eyes of wicks of lights,
Thin as the rushes, and as many,
Make in their minds uncertain shapes of music,
And slyly string their phony harps with twine.

The girls with eyes of drops of water,
Thin as the fires, and as frightened,
Bring pennies and their empty zodiacs.
Horses, loose on a plain, drum
The secret dance their thought does now!

Come up and light your harmless questions.
Burn them to the Brazen Face,
And wait, in terror, for the Brazen Voice.

“You girls with eyes of wicks of lights,
Shake me: I ring like a bank.
I shout like the assembly: ‘Go, be presidents!’
You shall all marry rectangles!”

But you with eyes of drops of water,
Punch my brass eyes with your little fists;
I am a box, my voice is only electric.
So keep your pennies for the poor;
Sew, in your houses, and cry.”

But already, down the far, fast ladders of light
The stern, astounding angel
Starts with a truer message,
Carrying a lily.

TROPICS

At noon the sky goes off like a gun.

Guards, on the Penal Island,
Converging, mad as murder, in the swearing cane,
Arrest the four footed wind.

But the chained and numbered men
Do not cease their labor:
Building a cage for the devouring sun.

At six o'clock, exactly,
The day explodes like a bomb,
And it is night.

Instantly, the guards
Hide in the jungle, build a boat
And escape.

But the prisoners of the state
Do not cease their labor:
Collecting the asphalt fragments of the night.

FUGITIVE

Out in the green sun-dancing cane a mad half-Spaniard
Hiding, like a robber, from a coffee-drinking Judas,
Fears the newspaper owners
And the millionaires.

Planted, like bulbs, in the wet earth of sleep
His eyes had started to sprout:
Sea-changing in his murk of dreaming blood,
And shining in his fathoms of ambition,
Bones had begun to turn to money.

But now with secret agents out of mind
And mad sunstorm of parrots out of memory,
Beyond two miles of jungle,
He only sees the sweetly drumming sun.

And yet his waking memory, a murderous rooster,
Crested with a rag of meat,
Whirls its spurs in a cloud of magic feathers,
Braving the bread-colored dust.

But bamboo trees click in the wind like rosaries.
Charmed with watchfulness and thirst
His paper mask plays, (always), dead.

And in the priestly darkness of his love
Twenty prayers at once, to Saint Lazare
Talk with tongues of candle-flame,

And one by one are folded up
The treacherous, fly-catching flowers of his will.

ASH WEDNESDAY

The naked traveller,
Stretching, against the iron dawn, the bowstrings
 of his eyes,
Starves on the mad sierra.

But the sleepers,
Prisoners in a lovely world of weeds,
Make a small, red cry,
And change their dreams.

Proud as the mane of the whinnying air,
Yet humble as the flakes of water
Or the chips of the stone sun, the traveller
Is nailed to the hill by the light of March's razor;

And when the desert barks, in a rage of love
For the noon of the eclipsc,
He lies with his throat cut, in a frozen crater.

Then the sleepers,
Prisoners of a moonward power of tides,
Slain by the stillness of their own reflections,
Sit up, in their graves, with a white cry,
And die of terror at the traveller's murder.

SONG

Come where the grieving rivers of the night
Copy the speeches of the sea:
And hear how this devouring weather
Steals our music.

Under a tent of branches
Let grow our harps in windy trees.

But, in the flowering of our windless morning
We should be slow-paced watchmen,
Crossing, on our ecliptics, with a cry of planets,
Homesick, at the sharp rim
Of our Jerusalem, the day.

Then weep where the splendid armies of the sky
Copy the prisoner's visions:
Yet keep the arrows of your eyes unquivered.
Light more watch fires:

Because the thieving stars may come
And steal our lives.

SOME BLOODY MUTINY

Some bloody mutiny opens up our earth
With bitten furrow, and the share's deep drive;
And in the breezy glitter of the sod,
We're sown, like snapshots, by the sun.

Tackle of nerve and vein
Sews tight the soul to our experimental flesh:
Blood and lymph, the body's tailors,
Display their zebra natures in our zoo of skin.

See where the pretty children curse the sea,
Trading their pennies for the sun,
Ripping the rind of Eden, monkey-handed!

Grown murderers rewind
The manners of the firmament to fit
Tricks of our clockwork treachery.
We time our Easters by the rumpus
In our dancehall arteries.

"The world's my photograph.
The tick in my heart is not my brother's keeper."
Says the radio in the throat:
"The war's my mirror, and there's no Good Friday."

Yet heaven is given
To ingrow in this flimsy cage of structures,
Battle the ravage of our ordinary marrow,
And flower for us
Upon the bonebranch we made dead.

CRUSOE

Sometimes the sun beats up the rocks of capes
And robs the green world with a clangor of banks.

Then the citizens
Come out to stone the sky; and with their guns
Mean to shoot the highpowered spheres to pieces:
At dawn, the laws, in the yards of all the prisons,
Propose to hang the robber, the breeder of life.

What if no more men will learn to turn again
And run to the rainy world's boundaries?
What if no more men will learn to atone
By hard, horseplay of shipwreck in the drench of
Magellan,
And still steer by the stars' unending Lent?

What if the last man
Will no more learn, and run
The stern, foundering ocean, north of the line,
Where crew and cargo drown in the thrash of the
wreck,
The day he's driven to his Penal Island,
His own rich acre of island, like the wiseguy Crusoe!

DIRGE

Some one who hears the bugle neigh will know
How cold it is when sentries die by starlight.

But none who love to hear the hammering drum
Will look, when the betrayer
Laughs in the desert like a broken monument,
Ringing his tongue in the red bell of his head,
Gesturing like a flag.

The air that quivered after the earthquake
(When God died like a thief)
Still plays the ancient forums like pianos;
The treacherous wind, lover of the demented,
Will harp forever in the haunted temples.

What speeches do the birds make
With their beaks, to the desolate dead?
And yet we love those carsick amphitheaters,
Nor hear our Messenger come home from hell
With hands shot full of blood.

A SONG

When it was day, we heard the panes of windows
Clash like tin
When they were blinded by the sun.
And, walking by the walls of silent houses,
We were deafened by the spring.

O, it was then we said we heard the queen of Carthage
Sing in her window,
And saw the armor of Aeneas
Come crowding through the flowerbeds,
To glitter in the jangling shadows of her door.

O it was then we said we saw the sun
Ride like a piker through the flowering tree,
When all those branches rippled in a cloud of ribbons!
He came parading through the city's cheering
 bullring.
Riding between the houses,
And the branches' curtains,
Like a shower.

But now, slow steps of walkers in the evening
Walk on the stones like the precise, loud
Ominous talk of fretful waterclocks,
And wear away the waning light.

Forget the flashing aspens, how they rang, this
 morning,
In the mimic rivers of the wind,
For all are silent.

One by one, come home, my pretty children;
Put away the choiring day for it is done;
And in the stillness of the tree, the sunset's solemn
 'cellos
One by one begin to play,
While evening fills the city's avenues
With all her quiet pianos.

No one who loves the fleering fife will feel
The light of morning stab his flesh,

But some who hear the trumpet's raving, in the
 ruined sky,
Will dread the burnished helmet of the sun,
Whose anger goes before the King.

APRIL

April, like a leopard in the windy woods,
Sports with the javelins of the weather;

And the hunters,
Eye-level with the world's clean brim,
Sight their strings, in masking rocks not moving,
And shower with arrows
The innocent, immortal season.

Hear how like lights these following releases
Of sharpened shaft-flights sing across the air,
And play right through, unwounding, clearest
windworks—

To disappear, unpublished, in the reeds.

But where their words are quenched, the world is
quickened:
The lean air suddenly flowers,
The little voices of the rivers change;

So that the hunters put away their silver quivers,
Die to the level of river and rockbrim,
And are translated, homeward,
To the other, solemn, world.

THE GREEK WOMEN

The ladies in red capes and golden bracelets
Walk like reeds and talk like rivers,
And sigh, like Vichy water, in the doorways;

And looks run down the land like colts,
Race with the wind, (the mares, their mothers', lover)
Down to the empty harbor.

All spine and sandal stand the willow women;
They shake their silver bangles
In the olive-light of clouds and windows,
Talking, among themselves, like violins;

And, opening their eyes wide as horizons,
Seem to await the navy home from Troy.

No longer stand together, widow women!
Give your gold ornaments to the poor,
Make run the waterspeech of beads between your
fingers:

For Troy is burned, and Greece is cursed,
The plague comes like a cloud.
All your men are sleeping in the alien earth,

But one.

And Clytemnestra, walking like a willow, stares.
Beads and bracelets gently knifeclash all about her,
Because the conqueror, the homecome hero,
The soldier, Agamemnon,
Bleeds in her conscience, twisting like a root.

CALYPSO'S ISLAND

See with how little motion, now, the noon wind
Fills the woods' eyes with flirting oleanders,
While perpendicular sun lets fall
Nickels and dimes on the deep harbor.

Fair cries of divers fly in the air
Amid the rigging of the newcome schooner,
And the white ship
Rides like a petal on the purple water
And flings her clangorous anchor in the quiet deeps,
And wrecks the waving waterlights.

Then Queen Calypso
Wakes from a dreaming lifetime in her house of
wicker,
Sees all at once the shadows on the matting
Coming and going like a leopard;
Hears for the first time the flame-feathered birds
Shout their litany in the savage tree;

And slowly tastes the red red wound
Of the sweet pomegranate,

And lifts her eyelids like the lids of treasures.

THE PRIDE OF THE DEAD

The doors are down before the ancient tombs
And wind dies in the empty gate.
The paper souls of famous generals
Complain, as dry as leaves, among the stones
of Thebes.

The jars of gravel that was one time corn,
The wineskins that the mourners left them,
They know will all be dry forever,
These tired emperors, stitched up for good,
As black as leather.

So we are startled by the leaf-speech of some skinny
Alexander:
“Strike from the harpstrings of the rain
Bars of a dirge.
Pacify the ancient dead
For fear they be allowed to love the thin, salt smell
of life,
And drift across the rims of graves
Like smoke across a crater,
And loiter in your windless squares,
And scare the living, hiding in the rubble of the
ruined treasures.”

The paper souls of emperors,
Frisk on the stones as sharp as leaves, and sing:
“Draw back upon our night some windless morning,
And hang it like a shroud upon your burning country,
And strike us, from the tinny harpstrings of the rain
Bars of a dirge.”

THE BOMBARDED CITY

Now let no man abide
In the lunar wood
The place of blood.
Let no man abide here,
Not even in a dream,
Not in the lunar forest of this undersea.

Oh you who can a living shadow show
Grieving in the broken street,
Fear, fear the drowners,
Fear the dead!
But if you swagger like the warring Leader
Fear far more
What curse rides down the starlit air,
Curse of the little children killed!
Curse of the little children killed!

Then let no living man, or dead, abide
In this lunar wood,
No, not even in a dream.

For when the houses lean along the night
Like broken tombs,
And shout, with silent windows,
Naked and windy as the mouths of masks,
They still pour down
(As conch-shells, from their curling sleep, the sea)
The air raid's perished roar.

But do not look aside at what you hear.
Fear where you tread,

And be aware of danger growing like a nightshade
Through the openings of the stone.
But mostly fear the forum,
Where, in the midst, an arch and pediment,
Space out, in honor of the guilty Warlord,
A starlit area
Much like the white geometry of peace:

O dread that silent place!
For even when field flowers shall spring
Out of the Leader's lips, and open eyes,
And even while the quiet root
Shall ravel his murdering brain,
Let no one, even on that holiday,
Forget the never-sleeping curse.
And even when the grass grows in his groin,
And golden-rod works in his rib,
And in his teeth the ragweed grins,
As furious as ambition's diligence:
And when, in wind,
His greedy belly waves, kneedeep in weeds,
O dread the childish voices even then,
Still scratching near him like a leaf,
And fear the following feet
That are laid down like little blades,
Nor face the curses of the innocent
That mew behind you like a silver hinge.

For even in the dream of peace
All men will flee the weedy street,
The forum fallen down,
The cursed arenas full of blood,
Hearing the wind creep in the crannied stone:

Oh, no man can remain,
Hearing those souls weep in the hollow ruin.

For there no life is possible,
Because the eyes of soldiers, blind, destroyed,
Lurk like Medusas of despair,
Lay for the living in the lunar door,
Ready to stare outside
And freeze the little leaping nerves
Behind the emperor's sight.

And there no life is possible
Because a weeping childvoice, thin
Unbodied as the sky,
Rings like an echo in the empty window:
And thence its sound
Flies out to feel, with fingers sharp as scalpels,
The little bones inside the politician's ear.

Oh let no man abide
In the lunar wood,
The place of blood.
Let no man abide there, no,
Not even in a dream.

THE STORM AT NIGHT

All night the wind sings like a surf
Filling our windows with the flailing hailstorm.
The fearful prisoner lies bound
In blankets and bodily sleep:
Morning will come, the wind will die away, and he
 will see,
What argosies lie drawn and quartered, on the sand
 and boulders
Of his Tierra del Fuego:
What cargoes foundered off the Greenland of his icy
 dream,
His Labradors of greed and grief.

How many men have rock and flood undone,
Who never tried to cry, in the welter of the deadly
 weather:
“Oh save us, in the dark tornadoes of Genesareth!”

But see, how through the waterthrash of surf and reef
The mind fights homeward to the beach,
Works loose, half dead, from the huge seas,
And lets its poor, mute mask be lifted to the light,
So sleep can leak away, and leave the water-dazzled
 eyes
To wake and wonder!

For morning works a miracle of sun and silence,
And light drowns in the trees.

THE OHIO RIVER—LOUISVILLE

No one can hear the loud voice of the city
Because of the tremendous silence
Of this slow-moving river, quiet as space.

Not the towering bridge, the crawling train,
Not the knives of pylons
Clashing in the sun,
And not the sky-swung cables;
Not the outboard boat
Swearing in the fiery distance like a locust,
Not the iron cries of men:
Nothing is heard,
Only the immense and silent movement of the river.

The trains go through the summer quiet as paper,
And, in the powerhouse, the singing dynamos
Make no more noise than cotton.
All life is quieter than the weeds
On which lies lightly sprawling,
Like white birds shot to death,
The bathers' clothing.

But only where the swimmers float like alligators,
And with their eyes as dark as creosote
Scrutinize the murderous heat,
Only there is anything heard:
The thin, salt voice of violence,
That whines, like a mosquito, in their simmering
blood.

THE DREAMING TRADER

Blacker and whiter than the pages of his ledger
The dreaming trader turns to stone
Because he hears the wind's voice sing this song:
"You shall set sail from the steps of the Exchange
And not be seen until the word returns: 'Lost with
all hands.'

You shall set sail from the steps of the Sub-Treasury
And pass Grand Central at the fall of night
And never be heard of again."

The banker and the shipwright and the craven trader
Can spread their plans, and talk their mathematics
Among the ladders and the stanchions of the skinny
ships;

(The cargoliners, in a leafless forest, on their ways) .
But when the steel trees sing like harpstrings in the
winter windstorm,
Their minds roll up like blueprints,
And they blow away.

Blacker and whiter than the pages of his ledger
The dreaming trader turns to stone:
"You shall set sail from the steps of the Exchange:
And not be seen until the word returns: 'Lost with
all hands.'

You shall set sail from the steps of the Sub-Treasury
And pass Grand Central at the fall of night
And founder in the dark Sargassos of your own
intolerable dream
And never be heard of again."

THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS

Somewhere, inside the wintry colonnade,
Stands, like a churchdoor statue, God's Apostle,
Good St. Peter, by the brazier,
With his back turned to the trial.

As scared and violent as flocks of birds of prey,
The testimonies of the holy beggars
Fly from the stones, and scatter in the windy shadows.

The accusations of the holy judge
Rise, in succession, dignified as rockets,
Soar out of silence to their towering explosions
And, with their meteors, raid the earth.

And the gates of night fall shut with the clangor
of arms.

The crafty eyes of witnesses, set free to riot,
Now shine as sharp as needles at the carved Apostle's
mantle.

Voices begin to rise, like water, in the colonnade;
Fingers accuse him like a herd of cattle.

Then the Apostle, white as marble, weak as tin
Cries out upon the crowd:
And, no less artificial than the radios of his voice,
He flees into the freezing night.

And all the constellations vanish out of heaven
With a glassy cry;
Cocks crow as sharp as steel in the terrible, clear east,
And the gates of night fall shut with the thunder
of Massbells.

AUBADE—HARLEM

(For Baroness G. de Hueck)

Across the cages of the keyless aviaries,
The lines and wires, the gallows of the broken kites,
Crucify, against the fearful light,
The ragged dresses of the little children.
Soon, in the sterile jungles of the waterpipes and
ladders,
The bleeding sun, a bird of prey, will terrify the poor,
Who will forget the unbelievable moon.

But in the cells and wards of whiter buildings,
Where the glass dawn is brighter than the knives
of surgeons,
Paler than alcohol or ether,
Greyer than guns and shinier than money,
The white men's wives, like Pilate's,
Cry in the peril of their frozen dreams:

"Daylight has driven iron spikes,
Into the flesh of Jesus' hands and feet:
Four flowers of blood have nailed Him to the walls
of Harlem."

Along the white halls of the clinics and the hospitals
Pilate vanishes with a cry:
They have cut down two hundred Judases,
Hanged by the neck in the opera houses and
museums.

Across the cages of the keyless aviaries,
The lines and wires, the gallows of the broken kites,
Crucify, against the fearful light,
The ragged dresses of the little children.

,

AUBADE—THE ANNUNCIATION

When the dim light, at Lauds, comes strike her
 window,
Bellsong falls out of Heaven with a sound of glass.

Prayers fly in the mind like larks,
Thoughts hide in the height like hawks:
And while the country churches tell their blessings
 to the distance,
Her slow words move,
(Like summer winds the wheat) her innocent love:
Desires glitter in her mind
Like morning stars:

Until her name is suddenly spoken
Like a meteor falling.

She can no longer hear shrill day
Sing in the east,
Nor see the lovely woods begin to toss their manes.
The rivers have begun to sing.
The little clouds shine in the sky like girls:
She has no eyes to see their faces.

Speech of an angel shines in the waters of her thought
 like diamonds,
Rides like a sunburst on the hillsides of her heart,
And is brought home like harvests,
Hid in her house, and stored
Like the sweet summer's riches in our peaceful barns.

But in the world of March outside her dwelling,
The farmers and the planters
Fear to begin their sowing, and its lengthy labor,
Where, on the brown, bare furrows,
The winter wind still croons as dumb as pain.

DIRGE FOR A TOWN IN FRANCE

Up among the stucco pears, the iron vines,
Mute as their watered roses, their mimosas,
The wives glance down among the traceries
Of balconies: the one-time finery
Of iron, suburban balconies.

Down in the shadowy doors,
Men fold their arms,
And hearken after the departing day
That somewhere sings more softly
Than merry-go-rounds in distant fairs.

O, it is not those first, faint stars
Whose fair light, falling, whispers in the river;
And it is not the dusty wind,
Waving the waterskirts of the shy-talking fountain,

That wakes the wooden horses' orchestra,
The fifing goldfinch, and the phony flute,
And the steam robins and electric nightingales
That blurred the ding of cymbals,
That other time, when childhood turned and turned
As grave as sculpture in a zodiac.

And yet the mystery comes on
Spontaneous as the street-lights, in the plane trees:
The trees, whose paint falls off in flakes,
Elaborate as the arches
Of a deserted opera!

The roses and mimosas in the windows
Adore the night they breathe, not understanding;
The women dream of bread and chocolate
In their aquariums
Of traceries, and lace, and cherubim;

But the men die, down in the shadowy doors,
The way their thoughts die in their eyes,
To see those sad and funny children
Run down the colonnade of trees
Where the carnival doesn't exist:
Those children, who are lost too soon,
With fading laughter, on the road along the river:
Gone, like the slowing cavalcade, the homeward
horses.

AUBADE—THE CITY

Now that the clouds have come like cattle
To the cold waters of the city's river,
All the windows turn their scandalized expression
Toward the tide's tin dazzle,

And question, with their weak-eyed stare,
The riotous sun.

From several places at a time
Cries of defiance,
As delicate as frost, as sharp as glass,
Rise from the porcelain buildings
And break in the blue sky.

Then, falling swiftly from the air,
The fragments of this fragile indignation
Ring on the echoing streets
No louder than a shower of pins.

But suddenly the bridges' choiring cables
Jangle gently in the wind
And play like quiet piano-strings.

All down the faces of the buildings
Windows begin to close
Like figures in a long division.

Those whose eyes all night have simulated sleep,
Suddenly stare, from where they lie, like wolves,
Tied in the tangle of the bedding,

And listen for the waking blood
To flood the apprehensive silence of their flesh.
They fear the heart that now lies quenched may
 quicken,
And start to romp against the rib,
Soft and insistent as a secret bell.

They also fear the light will grow
Into the windows of their hiding places, like a tree
Of tropical flowers
And put them, one by one, to flight.

Then life will have to begin.
Pieces of paper, lying in the streets,
Will start up, in the twisting wind,
And fly like idiot birds before the faces of the crowds.
And in the roaring buildings
Elevator doors will have begun
To clash like swords.

THE PERIL

When anger comes to the coast of our desolate
country
And the sky is the color of armor,
We listen, in the silence of the cliffs and bays as
still as steel,
For the cry that terrifies the sentinel.
And if it sound, oh! suddener than Java dancers
Face us all the swords we fear.
Well, we have arms: we will put them to trial.

But even as we wait, in hiding, for the unknown
signal,
It is the Bridegroom comes like lightning where
we never looked!
His eyes are angels, armed in smiles of fire.
His Word puts out the spark of every other sun
Faster than sunlight ever hid the cities
Of the fire-crowded universe!
How shall I stand such light, being dim as my fear?

Rob me, and make me poor enough to bear my
priceless ransom;
Lock me and dower me in the gifts and jails of
tribulation:
Stab me and save me with the five lights of Your
Crucifixion!

And I'll become as strong as wax, as weak as diamonds,
And read Your speeches deeper than the sea
And, like the sky, fair!

ADVENT

Charm with your stainlessness these winter nights,
Skies, and be perfect!
Fly vivider in the fiery dark, you quiet meteors,
And disappear.
You moon, be slow to go down,
This is your full!

The four white roads make off in silence
Towards the four parts of the starry universe.
Time falls like manna at the corners of the wintry
earth.
We have become more humble than the rocks,
More wakeful than the patient hills.

Charm with your stainlessness these nights in Advent,
holy spheres,
While minds, as meek as beasts,
Stay close at home in the sweet hay;
And intellects are quieter than the flocks that feed
by starlight.

Oh pour your darkness and your brightness over all
our solemn valleys,
You skies: and travel like the gentle Virgin,
Toward the planets' stately setting,

Oh white full moon as quiet as Bethlehem!

- CAROL

Flocks feed by darkness with a noise of whispers,
In the dry grass of pastures,
And lull the solemn night with their weak bells.

The little towns upon the rocky hills
Look down as meek as children:
Because they have seen come this holy time.

God's glory, now, is kindled gentler than low
candlelight
Under the rafters of a barn:
Eternal Peace is sleeping in the hay,
And Wisdom's born in secret in a straw-roofed
stable.

And O! Make holy music in the stars, you happy
angels.
You shepherds, gather on the hill.
Look up, you timid flocks, where the three kings
Are coming through the wintry trees;

While we unnumbered children of the wicked
centuries
Come after with our penances and prayers,
And lay them down in the sweet-smelling hay
Beside the wise men's golden jars.

HOW LONG WE WAIT

How long we wait, with minds as quiet as time,
Like sentries on a tower.
How long we watch, by night, like the astronomers.

Heaven, when will we hear you sing,
Arising from our grassy hills,
And say: "The dark is done, and Day
Laughs like a Bridegroom in His tent, the lovely sun,
His tent the sun, His tent the smiling sky!"

How long we wait with minds as dim as ponds
While stars swim slowly homeward in the water
 of our west!
Heaven, when will we hear you sing?

How long we listened to the silence of our vineyards
And heard no bird stir in the rising barley.
The stars go home behind the shaggy trees.
Our minds are grey as rivers.

O earth, when will you wake in the green wheat,
And all our Trappist cedars sing:
"Bright land, lift up your leafy gates!
You abbey steeple, sing with bells!
For look, our Sun rejoices like a dancer
On the rim of our hills."

In the blue west the moon is uttered like the word:
 "Farewell."

A LETTER TO MY FRIENDS

*On entering the Monastery of
Our Lady of Gethsemani, 1941*

This holy House of God,
Nazareth, where Christ lived as a boy,
These sheds and cloisters,
The very stones and beams are all befriended
By cleaner sun, by rarer birds, by lovelier flowers.

Lost in the tigers' and the lions' wilderness,
More than we fear, we love these holy stones,
These thorns, the phoenix's sweet and spikey tree.

More than we fear, we love the holy desert,
Where separate strangers, hid in their disguises,
Have come to meet, by night, the quiet Christ.

We who have some time wandered in those crowded
 ruins,
(Farewell, you woebegone, sad towns)
We who have wandered like (the ones I hear)
 the moaning trains,
(Begone, sad towns!)
We'll live it over for you here.

Here all your ruins are rebuilt as fast as you
 destroy yourselves,
In your unlucky wisdom,
Here in the House of God
And on the holy hill,

Where fields are the friends of plenteous heaven,
While starlight feeds, as bright as manna,
All our rough earth with wakeful grace.

And look, the ruins have become Jerusalems,
And the sick cities re-arise, like shining Sions!
Jerusalems, these walls and rooves,
These bowers and fragrant sheds,
Our desert's wooden door,
The arches, and the windows, and the tower!

THE CANDLEMAS PROCESSION

Lumen

Ad revelationem gentium.

Look kindly, Jesus, where we come,
New Simeons, to kindle,
Each at Your infant sacrifice his own life's candle.

And when Your flame turns into many tongues,
See how the One is multiplied, among us, hundreds!
And goes among the humble, and consoles our
sinful kindred.

It is for this we come,
And, kneeling, each receive one flame:
Ad revelationem gentium.

Our lives, like candles, spell this simple symbol:

Weep like our bodily life, sweet work of bees,
Sweeten the world, with your slow sacrifice.
And this shall be our praise:
That by our glad expense, our Father's will
Burned and consumed us for a parable.

Nor burn we now with brown and smoky flames,
but bright
Until our sacrifice is done,
(By which not we, but You are known)
And then, returning to our Father, one by one,
Give back our lives like wise and waxen lights.

CANA

*“This beginning of miracles did Jesus
in Cana of Galilee.”*

Once when our eyes were clean as noon, our rooms
Filled with the joys of Cana's feast:
For Jesus came, and His disciples, and His Mother,
And after them the singers
And some men with violins.

Once when our minds were Galilees,
And clean as skies our faces,
Our simple rooms were charmed with sun.

Our thoughts went in and out in whiter coats than
God's disciples',
In Cana's crowded rooms, at Cana's tables.

Nor did we seem to fear the wine would fail:
For ready, in a row, to fill with water and a miracle,
We saw our earthen vessels, waiting empty.
What wine those humble waterjars foretell!

Wine for the ones who, bended to the dirty earth,
Have feared, since lovely Eden, the sun's fire,
Yet hardly mumble, in their dusty mouths, one prayer.

Wine for old Adam, digging in the briars!

THE WIDOW OF NAIN

The men that cut their graves in the grey rocks
Go down more slowly than the sun upon their dusty
country:

White as the wall, the weepers leave the town,
To be the friends of grief, and follow
To the new tomb a widow's sorrow.

The men with hands as hard as rope,
(Some smell of harvests, some of nets,) the strangers,
Come up the hill more slowly than the seasons of
the year.

“Why do you walk in funerals, you men of Nain,
Why go you down to graves, with eyes like winters,
And your cold faces clean as cliffs?
See how we come, our brows are full of sun,
Our smiles are fairer than the wheat and hay,
Our eyes are saner than the sea.
Lay down your burden at our four-roads' crossing,
And learn a wonder from the Christ, our Traveller.”

(Oh, you will say that those old times
Are all dried up like water,
Since the great God went walking on a road to
Nain.

How many hundred years has slept again in death
That widow's son, after the marvel of his miracle:
He did not rise for long, and sleeps forever.
And what of the men of the town?
What have the desert winds done to the dust
Of the poor weepers, and the widow's friends?)

The men that cut their graves in the grey rocks
Spoke to the sons of God upon the four cross roads:
“Men of Genesareth, who climb our hill as slow as
 spring or summer,
Christ is your Master, and we see His eyes are Jordans,
His hands and feet are wounded, and His words are
 wine.
He has let death baptize the one who stirs and wakens
In the bier we carry,
That we may read the Cross and Easter in this rising,
And learn the endless heaven
Promised to all the widow-Church’s risen children.”

ST. PAUL

When I was Saul, and sat among the cloaks,
My eyes were stones, I saw no sight of heaven,
Open to take the spirit of the twisting Stephen.
When I was Saul, and sat among the rocks,
I locked my eyes, and made my brain my tomb,
Sealed with what boulders rolled across my reason!

When I was Saul and walked upon the blazing desert
My road was quiet as a trap.
I feared what word would split high noon with light
And lock my life, and try to drive me mad:
And thus I saw the Voice that struck me dead.

Tie up my breath, and wind me in white sheets of
 anguish,
And lay me in my three days' sepulchre
Until I find my Easter in a vision.

Oh Christ! Give back my life, go, cross Damascus,
Find out my Ananias in that other room:
Command him, as you do, in this my dream;
He knows my locks, and owns my ransom,
Waits for Your word to take his keys and come.

TRAPPISTS, WORKING

Now all our saws sing holy sonnets in this world of
timber

Where oaks go off like guns, and fall like cataracts,
Pouring their roar into the wood's green well.

Walk to us, Jesus, through the wall of trees,
And find us still adorers in these airy churches,
Singing our other Office with our saws and axes.
Still teach Your children in the busy forest,
And let some little sunlight reach us, in our mental
shades, and leafy studies.

When time has turned the country white with grain
And filled our regions with the thrashing sun,
Walk to us, Jesus, through the walls of wheat
When our two tractors come to cut them down:
Sow some light winds upon the acres of our spirit,
And cool the regions where our prayers are reapers,
And slake us, Heaven, with Your living rivers.

THE SNARE

(For St. Benedict, in thanksgiving)

Once when, like birds, we feared the hunter's gun
Yet saw no enemy anywhere,
Lord, was our neck not in the hunter's snare?

How can we count the times we nearly died
By trickery, in the peaceful trees?
We played in places made for our destruction,
Flew in and out the little windows set, we thought,
To be our special, safe resort.
We planned our fortunes in an open trap.
Led by our recklessness into the nets,
Taking the bait, and slipping through the strings,
Who saved us, in the places that we thought were safe?

Oh, though you'll seem to lose all sight of hiding
thongs,
Poor blindness rest, and weakness smile:
For while, yourselves, you'd never find them,
Fold up your fear of them in heavenly Communion!

Then we'll be free of all the knots that try to tie us.
The sliding loop, the flying spring catch us no more
than air.
We shall have died to them before they ever thought
of us,
So fast our feet, now clumsy, and most full of clay,
Become when Jesus' grace has made them heavenly.

AN INVOCATION TO ST. LUCY

Lucy, whose day is in our darkest season,
(Although your name is full of light,)
We walkers in the murk and rain of flesh and sense,
Lost in the midnight of our dead world's winter
 solstice
Look for the fogs to open on your friendly star.

We have long since cut down the summer of our
 history;
Our cheerful towns have all gone out like fireflies
 in October.
The fields are flooded and the vine is bare:
How have our long days dwindled, now the world
 is frozen!

Locked in the cold jails of our stubborn will,
Oh hear the shovels growling in the gravel.
This is the way they'll make our beds for ever,
Ours, whose Decembers have put out the sun:
Doors of whose souls are shut against the summertime!

Martyr, whose short day sees our winter and our
 Calvary,
Show us some light, who seem forsaken by the sky:
We have so dwelt in darkness that our eyes are
 screened and dim,
And all but blinded by the weakest ray.

Hallow the vespers and December of our life, O
 martyred Lucy:
Console our solstice with your friendly day.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

The stars put out their pale opinions, one by one,
While the White-friar breaks the Truth, his Host,
Among his friends the simple Substances:
For thus he fathered minds to reason's peace,
And fed the children of the Kingdom
With the Person in the intellectual Bread.

His mind had never smarted with the bitter reek
Of the world's night, the flesh's smoke:
His eyes were always cradles for the Word of God:
His intellect His Bethlehem.

Better than Jacob's dream,
He saw how all created essences go up and down
Upon their Jacob's ladder,
Finding their own degree of likeness
To the Pure Act and Perfect Essence.

When matter lay as light as snow
On the strong Appennine of form,
And morning rose upon the church of Fossanova,
All creation lay transparent, as serene as water,
Full of the Child Who consecrates the universe,
Informing all with power and meaning, like a
Sacrament.

But oh, the day that sings upon the ridge
Steals from the stars the brittle fire of their analogies:
They vanish in the single intuition
Of the rising sun:
And the grey monks' Cistercian "*Subvenite*"
Follows Aquinas in his ransomed flight,
And loses him amid the cheering cherubim.

ST. ALBERIC

When your loud axe's echo on the ponds, at early
morning,
Scared the shy mallard from the shallows grey as tin,
The glades gave back your hammers' antiphons—
The din of nails that shamed the lazy spring.
Striving, like Adam, with the barren wildwood,
And with the desolation of the brake,
You builded, in a reedy place
A cloister and a Ladychurch.

But when the stones and clean-hewn beams
Heard no more sounds but of the bees, your
thoughtful eyes
Were always full of exile,
Though peaceful with the peace of pilgrims, and
with happiness
That shamed, in the deep wood, the sentimental
doves.

When in the church your canticles were done,
Even your silences were better than the birds,
whose song
Still fell, like fountains, from the forest to your
sunny cloister.
And when, in the high-noon of contemplation,
reason died by blindness,
Your faith escaped, and found the flowering Cross—
Loving, in Christ, the agony of Adam:
Body and Spirit tilled and gardened with our
penances and death.

And from the flowers of that frightful Paradise,
(The wounds that heal the loving mind)
Your diligence could draw such excellence
As shamed the bees at work in the wild rock.

Then did you fill the cloisters of your intellect,
The tabernacles in the secret churches of your will.
Slowly you built sweet counsel, like a honeycomb,
And fed your life with living Wisdom, Heaven's
essence.

THE IMAGE OF TRUE LOVERS' DEATH

It happened when they came to find our brother,
The men from the police,
And knocked at his five doors
With stern, accusing face:
"Come out, unprofitable monk,
And view our spurious badges,
While we convince you of sin:
(The mess your garden's in.)"

Before they cleared their iron throats
Or knocked or rang again,
Our brother was off to the hills,
Leaving his body in this position.

Inquire no more, stern aliens,
He is no longer in this place.
He has absconded through another exit.
He vanished when he heard your steps.
If you had never come,
Would he have made his escape?

But he has left us by the windows of his attic,
Dying the image of true lovers' death.
Follow him, if you think you can,
The birds point out his path:
But no, you cannot see him where he everywhere
appears
In all kinds of disguises.
The beadles pass him by, and never know,
Nor think to see him in his brothers' faces.

* * *

And thus the day begins.
The false detectives vanish with a cry.
The bells for sweet Communion fall like dew among
the shepherds.
The land sings softly with the waking sky:

“No longer seek your brother in his rational flesh,
For he has thrown his five wise wits away,
And gone to hide his whole delight
In somebody else’s joy.

“Shepherd, he’ll make your gladness a disguise to
clothe his laughter.
Look to the substance of your best desires,
And you will find him praying there.

“The graee in your elated heart
Will be that loving sinner’s glad abode.
The peace in your elean breast,
Is where he sits, with God, and takes his rest.

“And in your deepest happiness
He hides and keeps his holy house,
And bleeds there, on a daily Cross,
With Christ, in the strong joys of your Eucharist.”

THE FALL OF NIGHT

When the eleventh hour
Unbars the burning west,
And all the clouds go home like flocks,
The pines upon our barrier,
Stand in the gates of night, like laborers,
And wait their pay.

A shepherd scans the white accounting of the
evening star,
And moonlight fires a brittle spear
Into the windows of the cottager:
To the red west, the homeward farmers sing:
“We bring these heavy wagons full of hay to
make Your bed,
O Mercy, born between the animals.
Here in our harvest rest Your friendless head.
Kill, with Your smiles, our cruel sins,
While lights lean down to drink
The waters of Your look.
The lances of Your loving voice
Are sharper than the sabres of the Seraphim.”

“The tree of Jesse growing in our garden,
With branches spread against the noonward wall,
Once sacrificed, in May, a cloudy choir of blossoms—
Flowers that died of pity for the burden of the
virgin summer:
But see the August apples, red as blood.
Father, forget the arbors where we hid, in Eden:
And let these cross-branch fruits transfigure us
And make us gods.”

The shepherd on the solemn hill,
Shot through the shoulder by a rising planet,
Views the disaster of the burning west:
—The fiery doors of Jacob's tents,
The blazing armor of the Cherubim.

For the low walls of the western world are
 burning down,
The woods go up to meet
The white battalions of the rising night.

Oh skies, fly slowly with your heavy freight,
And moon, unlock the Judge's gate:
Here are the wagons of the final harvest.
Oh see the hallows, crowding to their window-sills,
And the high houses where the angels wait.

The rivers hide, because their eyes are wet.

THE BIOGRAPHY

Oh read the verses of the loaded scourges,
And what is written in their terrible remarks:
“The Blood runs down the walls of Cambridge town,
As useless as the waters of the narrow river—
While pub and alley gamble for His vesture.”

Although my life is written on Christ's Body like
a map,
The nails have printed in those open hands
More than the abstract names of sins,
More than the countries and the towns,
The names of streets, the numbers of the houses,
The record of the days and nights,
When I have murdered Him in every square and
street.

Lance and thorn, and scourge and nail
Have more than made His Flesh my chronicle.
My journeys more than bite His bleeding feet.

Christ, from my cradle, I had known You everywhere,
And even though I sinned, I walked in You, and
knew You were my world:
You were my France and England,
My seas and my America:
You were my life and air, and yet I would not
own You.

Oh, when I loved You, even while I hated You,
Loving and yet refusing You in all the glories
of Your universe

It was Your living Flesh I tore and trampled, not
the air and earth:
Not that You feel us, in created things,
But knowing You, in them, made every sin a sacrilege;
And every act of greed became a desecration,
Spoiled and dishonored You as in Your Eucharist.

And yet with every wound You robbed me of a crime,
And as each blow was paid with Blood,
You paid me also each great sin with greater graces.
For even as I killed You,
You made Yourself a greater thief than any in Your
company,
Stealing my sins into Your dying life,
Robbing me even of my death.

Where, on what cross my agony will come
I do not ask You:
For it is written and accomplished here,
On every Crucifix, on every altar.
It is my narrative that drowns and is forgotten
In Your five open Jordans,
Your voice that cries my: "*Consummatum est.*"

If on Your Cross Your life and death and mine
are one,
Love teaches me to read, in You, the rest of a new
history.
I trace my days back to another childhood,
Exchanging, as I go,
New York and Cuba for Your Galilee,

And Cambridge for Your Nazareth,
Until I come again to my beginning,
And find a manger, star and straw,
A pair of animals, some simple men,
And thus I learn that I was born,
Now not in France, but Bethlehem.

THE BETRAYAL

The sense that sits in the thin skins of lips
Was waiting with a traitor's kiss that made You sweat
 with death,
When envy, in the Lenten night,
Shone sharp as lightnings: and we came with blades.

What hate, what worlds of wormwood did our
 tongues distil!
We cried with voices dry as shot,
In Pilate's yard where pride of life
And love of glory laced Your brows in Blood.

What were our curses, dark as vinegar,
We swore, with tongues as sharp as thongs,
On Golgotha, where pride of life,
With easy slanders nailed You to the wood!

And all we uttered, all, was nails and gall,
With our desires cruel as steel.
We dug Your hands, and filled them full of Blood.
With little smiles as dry as dice
We whipped and killed You for Your lovely world.

You died, and paid Your traitors with a prayer
And cured our swearing darkness with Your wounds'
 five lights.
Eyes see Your holy hands, and, in them, flowers.
You let the doubter's finger feel the sun in Your side.
Ears have Your words, and tongues believe You
 wheat:
You feed with life the lips that kissed You dead!

RAHAB'S HOUSE

Now the lean children of the God of armies
(Their feet command the quaking earth)
Rise in the desert, and divide old Jordan
To crown this city with a ring of drums.
(But see the signal, like a crimson scar
Bleeding on Rahab's window-sill,
Spelling her safety with the red of our Redemption.)

The trumpets scare the valley with their sudden anger,
And thunderheads lean down to understand the
 nodding ark,
While Joshua's friend, the frowning sun,
Rises to burn the drunken houses with his look.
(But far more red upon the wall
Is Rahab's rescue than his scarlet threat.)

The clarions bind the bastions with their silver
 treble,
Shiver the city with their golden shout:
(Wells dry up, and stars fly back,
The eyes of Jericho go out,)
The drums around the reeling ark
Shatter the ramparts with a ring of thunder.

The kings that sat
On gilded chairs,
The princes and the great
Are dead.
Only a harlot and her fearful kindred
Fly like sparrows from that sudden grin of fire.

It is the flowers that will one day rise from
 Rahab's earth,
That have redeemed them from the hell of Jericho.
A rod will grow
From Jesse's tree,
Among her sons, the lords of Bethlchem,
And flower into Paradise.

Look at the gentle irises admiring one another
 by the water,
Under the leafy shadows of the Virgin's mercy,
And all the primroses and laughing flags
Bowing before Our Lady Mary in the Eden of her
 intercession,
And praising her, because they see the generations
Fly like a hundred thousand swallows into heaven,
Out of the jaws of Jericho,
Because it was the Son of God
Whose crimson signal wounded Rahab's wall,
Uttered our rescue in a figure of His Blood.

*AFTER THE NIGHT OFFICE—
GETHSEMANI ABBEY*

It is not yet the grey and frosty time
When barns ride out of the night like ships:
We do not see the Brothers, bearing lanterns,
Sink in the quiet mist,
As various as the spirits who, with lamps, are sent
To search our souls' Jerusalems
Until our houses are at rest
And minds enfold the Word, our Guest.

Praises and canticles anticipate
Each day the singing bells that wake the sun,
But now our psalmody is done.
Our hasting souls outstrip the day:
Now, before dawn, they have their noon.
The Truth that transsubstantiates the body's night
Has made our minds His temple-tent:
Open the secret eye of faith
And drink these deeps of invisible light.

The weak walls
Of the world fall
And heaven, in floods, comes pouring in:
Sink from your shallows, soul, into eternity,
And slake your wonder at that deep-lake spring.
We touch the rays we cannot see,
We feel the light that seems to sing.

Go back to bed, red sun, you are too late,
And hide behind Mount Olivet—

For like the flying moon, held prisoner,
Within the branches of a juniper,
So in the cages of consciousness
The Dove of God is prisoner yet:
Unruly sun, go back to bed.

But now the lances of the morning
Fire all their gold against the steeple and the
water-tower.
Returning to the windows of our deep abode of peace,
Emerging at our conscious doors
We find our souls all soaked in grace, like Gideon's
fleece.

SONG FOR THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The Child is sleeping in His golden house
Not to our Lent unknown,
Or to the windy meadows where the morning cries:
 "Rejoice!"

A thousand flowers think of Him, and raise their
 heads,
And wake Him with the echoes of their tiny shout.

But oh, the Child is weeping in a tender cloud.
Let the repentant deserts of the mind,
Our sandy wills, their barren rocks,
 (Where we have dreaded death by dryness
Or an arrow in the night,
Or something hiding in the lion's cavern)
Sudden astonish us with reed and rush,
And streams enchant us with their dancing lights.

Oh charm the belfries of the budding wood,
Brown thrush and cardinal,
Blackbird and oriole,
Pouring upon the land your golden din.
And when you wild Cistercians tune your praises
To our Latin, with your native liturgy,
We'll come and cultivate our sacrifice of corn and
 apples
And grow our hay and barley,
Wheat and wine.

And now the Child is laughing in His sunny door,
For all our atmosphere, alive with light,

And full of heaven, like an intellect,
Raises, before the faces of the flowering hills,
(And with no hands but those of spirit and of miracle)
The glorious Christ, as light as grace,
And flies Him homeward to His Father's house.

The Child is singing in His tent of stars.

THE WORD—A RESPONSORY

“Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum.”

My heart hath uttered . . .

Whom we desire to see,
Whose thoughts are worlds,
And Whose delights
Shine like perfections in the universe:
Whose admirable joy
Burns in the bosom of the triple Light:

My heart hath uttered a good Word.

Who drives across the stormy hill
His flocks of flying sun:
In Whom our admiration falls and dies
Like the sown seed alighting from the travels
of the wind,
To rise again when we receive our rain
And shoot the earth of April with the blades
of greenest praises.

My heart hath uttered . . .

The vital sap
And blood of every growth,
Nodding and talking in the rushes
To the water, to the way-farer:

Verbum bonum!

Whose keyless news
Unlocks the secret places
Of the peace-enfolded soul:
Whose exultation
Rifles the hidden riches of the will,

Oh be our glory! Never die!

*My heart hath uttered a good Word,
Whose Name is: "Sent"
Whom we desire to love:
Strong, in the fathoms of the heart, unseen,
Spending us heaven silent as a spring,
O perfect Word!
O Verbum bonum!*

*Whose Name is: "Savior,"
Whom we desire to hold;
Burn in our hearts, burn in our living marrow,
own our being,
Hide us and heal us in the hug of Thy delight,
Whose admirable might
Sings in the furnace of the Triple Glory!*

Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum.

THE DARK ENCOUNTER

O night of admiration, full of choirs,
O night of deepest praise,
And darkness full of triumph:
What secret and intrepid Visitor
Has come to crack our sepulchre?
He softly springs the locks of death
In the foretold encounter!

O silence with no syllable for weapon,
Drunk with valor,
Whose speechless wonder solves the knots of flesh
our captor:
Dower desires with your eloquence!

O darkness full of warning and abandon,
(Disarming every enemy,
Slaying the meaning of the mind's alarums)
Why do our steps still hesitate
Upon the threshold of incredible possession,
The sill of the tremendous rest,
Reading the riddle of His unexpected question?

O silence full of exclamation!
It is the time of the attack.
Our eyes are wider than the word: "Aware."
O darkness full of vision, vivid night,
Defying the frontier.

O silence full of execution,
All intuition and desire lie destroyed
When Substance is our Conqueror.

O midnight full of victory,
And silence of the wonderful acclaim,
And darkness full of sweet delight.

O night of admiration, full of choirs,
O night of deepest praise,
And darkness full of sweet delight!
What secret and intrepid Visitor
Has come to raise us from the dead?
He softly springs the locks of time, our sepulchre,
In the foretold encounter.

THE VICTORY

Sing your new song in the winepress where these
 bloody pence
Weep from the skin of our Gethsemani,
Knowing that we must die to break the seed our prison
And spring like wheat from the wet earth
Of who knows what arena:
Sing when the grinding locks
Break up our little cages,
Casting our exultation in those mills of teeth
To praise God with the great Ignatius Martyr.

Smile in the white eyes of the angry mist
For we have heard the thunder of the thousand
 harpers
Outside a blinded window,
There on the silent cobblestones,
Ring from the hobnails of a firing-squad
Hard by the russet, russet wall:

Shall we not love You, Christ,
Best in a shuttered house,
Although the silver windows sweat with dread?
Shall we not praise You, Savior,
Now at the rising of the sickle moon, our murderess,
When dawn is colder than a knife
Between the marrow and the flesh?

'This is the word You utter
To search our being to its roots:
This is the judgement and the question
And the joy we suffer:

This is our trial, this the weight of gladness that we
cannot bear,
But turn to water and to blood.

For some have gone, with bands, to die in battle,
Some die, with glory, in the sca:
Some with speeces, some by guns,
But we, like Peter, upside down.

Pride cannot jail us in the newsreels
For a death so humble.
That is the gladness that unlocks our chrysalis:
We have no grandeur and no name.
For who shall try to pay us money for our blinded
faces,
And our broken gait:
Or who shall praise us, falling all the way to Calvary?

The customs never catch us
With the stars our contraband
The day we hear the quiet gravel
Suddenly swearing at the steps of the Gestapo!

Then shall our hearts not sing
With vision and with victory
Because our eyes are full of blood?
Shall we not love you better, Brothers,
Wearing bencath the rags of our disguise
The Christ Who died for us?

Look up, you captives, crowding to the water,
Look up, Ezechiel, and see the open heavens
Salute you with the vision of the winged Evangelists.

You with your ankles in the water and your
garments white,
Lift up your heads, begin to sing:
And let your sights, exulting, rise and meet
The miracle of living creatures
In their burning, frowning flight.
The message of their lamps and fires
Warns you: make ready for the Face that speaks
like lightning,
Uttering the new name of your exultation
Deep in the vitals of your soul.
Make ready for the Christ, Whose smile, like
lightning,
Sets free the song of everlasting glory
That now sleeps, in your paper flesh, like dynamite.

THE TRAPPIST CEMETERY—GETHSEMANI

Brothers, the curving grasses and their daughters
Will never print your praises:
The trees our sisters, in their summer dresses,
Guard your fame in these green cradles:
The simple crosses are content to hide your
characters.

Oh do not fear
The birds that bicker in the lonely belfry
Will ever give away your legends.
Yet when the sun, exulting like a dying martyr,
Canonizes, with his splendid fire, the sombre hills,
Your graves all smile like little children,
And your wise crosses trust the mothering night
That folds them in the Sanctuary's wings.

You need not hear the momentary rumors of the road
Where cities pass and vanish in a single car
Filling the cut beside the mill
With roar and radio,
Hurling the air into the wayside branches
Leaving the leaves alive with panic.

Sec, the kind universe,
Wheeling in love about the abbey steeple,
Lights up your sleepy nursery with stars.

* * *

God, in your bodily life,
Untied the snarcs of anger and desire,
Hid your flesh from envy by these country altars,

Beneath these holy eaves where even sparrows have
their houses.

But oh, how like the swallows and the chimney
swifts

Do your free souls in glory play!
And with a cleaner flight,
Keener, more graceful circles,
Rarer and finer arcs
Than all these innocent attacks that skim our steeple!
How like these children of the summer evening
Do your rejoicing spirits
Deride the dry earth with their aviation!

But now the treble harps of night begin to play in
the deep wood,
To praise your holy sleep,
And all the frogs along the creek
Chant in the moony waters to the Queen of Peace.
And we, the mariners, and travellers,
The wide-eyed immigrants,
Praying and sweating in our steerage cabins,
Lie still and count with love the measured bells
That tell the deep-sea leagues until your harbor.

Already on this working earth you knew what
nameless love
Adorns the heart with peace by night,
Hearing, adoring all the dark arrivals of eternity.
Oh, here on earth you knew what secret thirst
Arming the mind with instinct,
Answers the challenges of God with garrisons
Of unified desire

And facing Him in His new wars
Is slain at last in an exchange of lives.

Teach us, Cistercian Fathers, how to wear
Silence, our humble armor.
Pray us a torrent of the seven spirits
That are our wine and stamina:
Because your work is not yet done.
But look: the valleys shine with promises,
And every burning morning is a prophecy of Christ
Coming to raise and vindicate
Even our sorry flesh.

Then will your graves, Gethsemani, give up their
angels,
Return them to their souls to learn
The songs and attitudes of glory.
Then will creation rise again like gold
Clean, from the furnace of your litanies:
The beasts and trees shall share your resurrection,
And a new world be born from these green tombs.

A WHITSUN CANTICLE

Olivet, Olivet! Where heaven robbed us
And stole our Christ, and sailed Him to the sky!
Oh, on that day His garments fluttered like a
 thousand flags
To see His feet command the sunny air.
You did not weep, Jerusalem: your towers and domes
Surprised the firmament with smiles of bronze.

Oh, could you not console us, you applauding acres
Better than the angels and their white command
Who packed and shuttered us, in utter beggary,
Behind the thin doors of the Cenacle?

But blindness falls more lightly than a shell
And look, our newborn eyes, as keen as children,
Knowing no splash or smear of too much light,
Laugh in the sharpest wonder of their vision
And drink the oceanic pressure of their sudden glory.

Father, Father, Whom we thought so hidden
Somewhere behind the jealous walls of Mars,
Oh how You visit us, at the deep roots of life,
With glad reprisals.
Oh drown us in the compound fortunes of these
 ten days' usury,
Reproach our lamentation with these fiery tongues:
Pay all our ransoms with a flock of notes
New-minted in Your golden furnaces.
Astound our nature with the wealth of Your revenge
For all our fear, and our concern.

Then pour us from the Cenacle into the sunny streets
And we will go evangelize the continents.

Minds, minds, sing like spring
To see the hills that fling their hands into the air:
To see the trees all yield their gladness to the tender
winds
And open wide their treasures:
Behold the birds, released like angels, from those
leafy palaces,
With fire and blue and red-gold splashing in their
painted wings,
Each one proclaiming part of the Apocalypse.
They aim their flights at all the four horizons
And fire their arrows of tremendous news.

World, world, sing like spring
To hear the harvests praising Heaven with a
thousand voices:
Behold the fertile clouds, in golden fleets,
Like flying frigates, full of gifts.
Behold the clouds, with loads of Gospel,
Splendid and simple as Apostles, in their outward
flight!
The waters of the sea all flash with laughter,
Leaping as if to kiss those high, high galleons,
That ride the heavens, full of freight.

But who shall tell the blazes and exchanges
The hidden lightning and the smiles of blinding night,
The kiss and vanish of the sudden invitation,
The game and promise of espousal?

O Holy Spirit, hear, we call Your Name aloud,
We speak You plain and humble in the terms
of prayer,
Whatever talk You grant us:
One day we run among the rocks as lithe as lions,
But it is better that, the next, You tame our jubilee,
And prune our praises lean as supplication:
Make us believe You better in the crazy desert,
And seek You better in the skipping heat,
Follow Your messages until we beat our heads
Against the jazz of the horizon.
We'll find You there as much as in the caves of shade,
The grass and springs of the oasis:
But only wring us always, at the center of our
inward earth,
Artesian secrets for the roots of love.

But if we walk up to the waist
In the green exultation of the growing harvest,
And if, in the ripe days, the sheaves and increase,
Springing to life on the off-beat of the tractor's congas
Bound from the bouncing binder light as lambs:
Or if we fly, like doves, to the blue woods and
consolations
Of the peaceful August,
And in high hiding ring our muffled bells:
Forgive us, always, if our clumsy wills,
Reeling with the possession of so pure a pleasure,
Stumble and break the bottles of our Pentecost.

ENVOI

Beloved Spirit, You are all the prudence and the
power
That change our dust and nothing into fields and
fruits:
Enfold our lives forever in the compass of Your
peaceful hills.
Build us a monastery, yes, forever,
(Stones of our cloister lofty as transparent air
And wonderful as light)
In the full fields of gentle Heaven.
Build us our cells forever in Your Mercy's woods:
Then tell Orion and Andromeda our hearts are
heavens
And that our eyes are light-years deep,
Sounding Your will, Your peace, in its unbounded
fathoms:
Oh balance all our turning orbits, till that morning,
Upon the center and the level of Your holy love:
Then lock our souls forever in the nucleus of its Law.

ODE TO THE PRESENT CENTURY

What heartbeats, lispings like a lizard in a broken
cistern,

Tell you, my prudent citizen, that you are nearly
dead?

We heard your pains revolving on the axis of a shout:
The cops and doctors view the winter of your
knifelong blood.

They chart the reeling of your clockwise reason
Flying in spirals to escape philosophy,
While life's ecliptic, drives you like an arrow
To the pit of pain.

And one by one your wars break up the arctic
Of your faultless logic,
And wills retreat upon themselves until the final
seizure:

Your frozen understanding separates
And dies in floes.

Oh how you plot the crowflight of that cunning thief,
your appetite,

But never see what fortunes
Turn to poison in your blood.

How have you hammered all your senses into curses,
Forever twisting in your memory
The nails of sensuality and death.

Have we not seen you stand, full-armed,
And miss the heavens with the aimless rifles of
your fear?

When are you going to unclench
The whited nerve of your rapacity, you cannibal:
Or draw one breath in truth and faith,
You son of Cain?

But if you are in love with fortunes, or with forgery,
Oh, learn to mint you golden courage
With the image of all Mercy's Sovereign,
Turn all your hunger to humility and to forgiveness,
Forsake your deserts of centrifugal desire:
Then ride in peaceful circles to the depths of life,
And hide you from your burning noon-day devil
Where clean rock-water dropwise spends, and dies
in rings.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST

I

When, for the fifteenth year, Tiberius Caesar
Cursed, with his reign, the Roman world,
Sharing the Near-East with a tribe of tetrarchs,
The Word of God was made in far-off province:
Deliverance from the herd of armored cattle,
When, from the desert, John came down to Jordan.

But his prophetic messages
Were worded in a code the scribes were not prepared
to understand.

Where, in their lexicons, was written: "Brood of
vipers,"
Applied, that is, to them?

"Who is this Lamb, Whose love
Shall fall upon His people like an army:
Who is this Savior, Whose sandal-latchet
This furious Precursor is afraid to loose?"

His words of mercy and of patience shall be flails
Appointed for the separation of the wheat and chaff.
But who shall fear the violence
And crisis of His threshing-floor
Except the envious and selfish heart?
Choose to be chaff, and fear the Winnower,
For then you never will abide His Baptism of Fire
and Spirit.

You proud and strong,
You confident in judgment and in understanding,
You who have weighed and measured every sin
And have so clearly analyzed the prophecies

As to be blinded on the day of their fulfilment:
Your might shall crumble and fall down before Him
 like a wall,
And all the needy and the poor shall enter in,
Pass through your ruins, and possess your kingdom.

This is the day that you shall hear and hate
The voice of His beloved servant.
This is the day your scrutiny shall fear
A terrible and peaceful angel, dressed in skins,
Knowing it is your greedy eyes, not his, that die
 of hunger.
For God has known and loved him, from his
 mother's womb,
Remembering his name, filling his life with grace,
Teaching him prophecy and wisdom,
To burn before the Face of Christ,
Name Him and vanish, like a proclamation.

11

*Tell us, Prophet, Whom you met upon the far frontier
At the defended bridge, the guarded outpost.*

"I passed the guards and sentries,
Their lances did not stay me, or the gate of spikes

Or the abysses of the empty night.
I walked on darkness

To the place of the appointed meeting:
I took my sealed instructions,
But did not wait

For compliment or for congratulation from my
hidden Captain.

Even at my return

I passed unseen beside the stern defenders

In their nests of guns,

And while the spies were trying to decode some secret

In my plain, true name.

I left them like the night wind."

What did you learn on the wild mountain

When hell came dancing on the noon-day rocks?

"I learned my hands could hold

Rivers of water

And spend them like an everlasting treasure.

I learned to see the waking desert

Smiling to behold me with the springs her ransom,

Open her clear eyes in a miracle of transformation,

And the dry wilderness

Suddenly dressed in meadows,

All garlanded with an embroidery of flowering
orchards

Sang with a virgin's voice,

Descending to her wedding in these waters

With the Prince of Life.

All barrenness and death lie drowned

Here in the fountains He has sanctified,

And the deep harps of Jordan

Play to the contrite world as sweet as heaven."

But did your eyes buy wrath and imprecation

In the red cinemas of the mirage?

“My eyes did not consult the heat or the horizon:
I did not imitate the spurious intrepidity
Of that mad light full of revenge.
God did not hide me in the desert to instruct my soul
In the fascism of an asp or scorpion.
The sun that burned me to an Arab taught me
nothing:
My mind is not in my skin.
I went into the desert to receive
The keys of my deliverance
From image and from concept and from desire.
I learned not wrath but love,
Waiting in darkness for the secret stranger
Who, like an inward fire,
Would try me in the crucibles of His unconquerable
Law:
His heat, more searching than the breath of the
Simoon,
Separates love from hunger
And peace from satiation,
Burning, destroying all the matrices of anger and
revenge.
It is because my love, as strong as steel, is armed
against all hate
That those who hate their own lives fear me like
a sabre.”

III

St. John, strong Baptist,
Angel before the face of the Messiah
Desert-dweller, knowing the solitudes that lie
Beyond anxiety and doubt,

Eagle whose flight is higher than our atmosphere
Of hesitation and surmise,
You are the first Cistercian and the greatest Trappist:
Never abandon us, your few but faithful children,
For we remember your amazing life,
Where you laid down for us the form and pattern of
Our love for Christ,
Being so close to Him you were His twin.
Oh buy us, by your intercession, in your mighty
 heaven,
Not your great name, St. John, or ministry,
But oh, your solitude and death:
And most of all, gain us your great command of
 graces,
Making our poor hands also fountains full of life
 and wonder
Spending, in endless rivers, to the universe,
Christ, in secret, and His Father, and His
 sanctifying Spirit.

CLAIRVAUX

I

“Hidden in this heaven-harbor
Wood-cradle valley, narrow and away from men,
Bernard built me, model of all solitudes,
Picture of contemplation and of love, the figure
 of all prayer
Clairvaux cloister.”

Abbey, whose back is to the hills whose backs are
 to the world,
Your inward look is ever resting
Upon your central garth and garden, full of sun,
Your catch-light cloister.
In-turning, Peace-finding, living in a mirror that
 attracts the noon
You look at deep all-heaven in the pool: your heart,
Down-looking, down, not up, within, not out,
Downdrawing all the sky into your quiet
Well or pool or mirror-lake of clear humility.

Holy, immense. the arching air,
The vaulted heaven, full of liberty,
That never even notices the continents,
Passing them forever by, in fleets of light,
Sees you, Clairvaux, and is astounded by the
 confidence of your expectancy,
Leans down into your loving and wide-open heart
And loves you, who have kept yourself for the
 blue sky alone,
And know no other landscape, and no other view.
O white, O modest cloister,

Shy cloister, Heaven is your prisoner.
He comes to earth and hides His image in your heart
Where He may rest unseen by the grey, grasping,
Jealous, double-dealing world:
The day that flies the complicated alleys
And the blind yards, and covered squares, and
wall-eyed markets
Fills your clean court with seas of peace.

But oh, how all the light-and-shaded bays are
garlanded with life,
With brotherlife, slow growing in the fruitful silence,
In this tender sun,
Clinging in strength to these safe walls, and one
another,
All interlacing, in the light, as close as vines:
Godlove in all their ways and gestures flowering
And God's peace giving firstfruits in their quietude.

O holy Bernard, wise in brotherlove,
Vintner who train and grow, and prune and tie us
Fast, trim us in sure and perfect arbors of stability
and rule:
You have forseen what vintages the Holy Spirit,
Ripening, in our concord, as in vine-vein the
strong sun,
Will trample in His press, His charity, in the due day,
To barrel us, His Burgundy.

II

These arches live together
Like psalm and antiphon,

And spend the light across our pavements
Spilling on warm stone all the sweet, drawn day:

Pouring in sun through rib and leaf and flower of
foliate window
Gardening the ground with shadow-light, with day
and night
In every lovely interplay.

My brothers, do you see these arches' stones, how
much they weigh,
Yet how the leaning stress of charity
Sports with weight, and laughs at height,
Destroying with light life all heaviness,
Forgetting gravity in flight,
Flying up bravely, arching over, poised in high hover,
Never fear, almost forever!

Nature is so transfigured by their stress on one another
That these square stones are angels: Oh, but Brothers,
Only by leaning on their key,
Who is their Christ and Father, their superior:
He is no greater or more mighty stone,
Still less the architect, or engineer:
And yet he bears the clearest image of the Builder's
meaning
Both for himself and all the rest:
He is the center of the Maker's mind and plan,
The clue to all their marvelous flight,
Their keystone, lord, abbot and head.

Now fall, time, slow bells spending,
 Spilling the hours, oh, the night-song, day-song,
 All the intervals, work's end
 Into the deep wood and farthest forest, vale's
 heart, glade and bottom
 Home-call sending grange and sheepfold wheat
 and rye-field,
 Prayerword telling, home to be in cloister-court,
 Under the arches, reading by the door-sill,
 Praying in uncarven choir-stall,
 By plain altars, cowed adorers, where Christ hangs
 and hides in golden dove,
 Dwells in the air above our heads
 And overshadows all our prayer with His tabernacle
 wings.

Oh peal your quiet unpretension and succession,
 time, your seasons
 No-hurrying us to our sweet, certain, everlasting
 home;
 And pour the news of these our slow progressions
 into the deep,
 Down-falling with little echo into (peace) our
 garth-well,
 Paying your bells like Christ our price, oh, yes,
 like Peace-blood's
 Ransom into our hearts:
 Our everlasting priceblood hour by hour you distil,
 Spilling us grace like gold, our Christ like gold,
 Grace-blood into our peace you send,
 Christ-blood, rich without end,

Spending us God to buy our silence and our holy
cloister,
And keep us in His wounds, our walls, sure and
secure:
Oh pay us, beg us, bells, our daily Christ,
As every midnight, noon and evening
Dawns our glorious rescue
In hymn and antiphon and psalm.

LA SALETTE

It is a hundred years since your shy feet
Ventured to stand upon the pasture grass of the
 high Alps,
Coming no deeper in our smoky atmosphere
Than these blue skies, the mountain eyes
Of the two shepherd children, young as flowers,
Born to be dazzled by no mortal snow.

Lady, it is a hundred years
Since those fair, terrible tears
Reproved, with their amazing grief
All the proud candor of those altitudes:
Crowning the flowers at your feet
With diamonds, that seized upon, transfigured
 into nails of light
The rays of the mountain sun!—

And by their news,
(Which came with cowbells to the evening village
And to the world with church-bells
After not too many days,)
And by their news

We thought the walls of all hard hearts
Had broken down, and given in,
Poured out their dirty garrisons of sin,
And washed the streets with our own blood, if
 need be—
—Only to have them clean!

And though we did not understand
The weight and import of so great a sorrow,
We never thought so soon to have seen
The loss of its undying memory,
Passing from the black world without a word,
Without a funeral!
For while our teeth were battling in the meat of
 miracles and favors,
Your words, your prophecies, were all forgotten!

Now, one by one,
The things you said
Have come to be fulfilled.

John, in the might of his Apocalypse, could not
 foretell
Half of the story of our monstrous century,
In which the arm of your inexorable Son,
Bound, by His Truth, to disavow your intercession
For this wolf-world, this craven zoo,
Has bombed the doors of hell clean off their hinges,
And burst the cage of antichrist,
And roused, with His first two great thunderbolts,
The chariots of Armageddon.

T H I R T Y P O E M S

*Reprinted in full from the volume
of that title first published in 1944*

LENT IN A YEAR OF WAR

One of you is a major, made of cord and catskin,

But never dreams his eyes may come to life and thread
The needle-light of famine in a waterglass.

One of you is the paper Jack of Sprites
And will not cast his sentinel voice
Spiraling up the dark ears of the wind
Where the prisoner's yell is lost.

“What if it was our thumbs put out the sun
When the Lance and Cross made their mistake?
You'll never rob us our Eden of drumskin shelters,
You, with the bite of John the Baptist's halter,
Getting away in the basket of Paul,
Loving the answer of death, the mother of Lent!”

Thus, in the evening of their sinless murders,
Jack and the Major, sifting the stars for a sign
See the north-south horizon parting like a string!

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Through every precinct of the wintry city
Squadroned iron resounds upon the streets;
Herod's police
Makes shudder the dark steps of the tenements
At the business about to be done.

Neither look back upon Thy starry country,
Nor hear what rumors crowd across the dark
Where blood runs down those holy walls,
Nor frame a childish blessing with Thy hand
Towards that fiery spiral of exulting souls!

Go, Child of God, upon the singing desert,
Where, with eyes of flame,
The roaming lion keeps thy road from harm.

PROPHET

I met a traveller from the holy desert,
Honeycomb, beggarbread eater,
Lean from drinking rain
That lies in the windprints of rocks.

He had been where
The winds of spring were cats
Running in the rigging of our trees.

He had already seen our new year's storms
Crowding the woods like wrestlers,
Fencing where the morning turns to water
On all our flashing pastures.

And he had also seen the rays of our sun,
Taken in a branchy cage,
Move and sing: those shining, choiring rays,
Telling the time when our woods' Saint Savior's
 promise,
Flashing like a crossflag in the sky,
Would come disarm the Lent.

I met a traveller from the holy desert.

THE DARK MORNING

This is the black day when
Fog rides the ugly air:
Water wades among the buildings
To the prisoner's curled ear.

Then rain, in thin sentences,
Slakes him like danger,
Whose heart is his Germany
Fevered with anger.

This is the dark day when
Locks let the enemy in
Through all the coiling passages of
(Curled ear) my prison!

SONG FOR OUR LADY OF COBRE

The white girls lift their heads like trees,
The black girls go
Reflected like flamingoes in the street

The white girls sing as shrill as water,
The black girls talk as quiet as clay.

The white girls open their arms like clouds,
The black girls close their eyes like wings:
Angels bow down like bells,
Angels look up like toys,

Because the heavenly stars
Stand in a ring:
And all the pieces of the mosaic, earth,
Get up and fly away like birds.

THE NIGHT TRAIN

In the unreason of a rainy midnight
France blooms along the windows
Of my sleepy bathysphere,
And runs to seed in a luxuriance of curious lights.

Escape is drawn straight through my dream
And shines to Paris, clean as a violin string,
While spring tides of commotion,
(The third-class pianos of the Orient Express)
Fill up the hollow barrels of my ears.

Cities that stood, by day, as gay as lancers
Are lost, in the night, like old men dying.
At a point where polished rails branch off forever
The steels lament, like crazy ladies.
We wake, and weep the deaths of the cathedrals
That we have never seen,
Because we head the jugulars of the country
Fly in the wind, and vanish with a cry.

At once the diplomats start up, as white as bread,
Buckle the careless cases of their minds
That just fell open in the sleeper:

For, by the rockets of imaginary sieges
They see to read big, terrible print,
Each in the other's face,

That spells the undecoded names
Of the assassins they will recognise too late:
The ones that seem to be secret police,
Now all in place, all armed, in the obvious ambush.

SAINT JASON

This is the night the false Saint Jason
Wakes in fear from his cannibal sleep,
And drenches the edges of his eyes
With his tears' iron overflow;

For the flying scream of his dead woman
Opened the stitches of his skin,
And Jason bounced in the burly wind
Like a man of sack and string.

"What do you want, in the windows of your wound
Where Judas' money shines
By daggers' waterlight?"

"—I want the martyrs' eyes, as tight as shells,
In death's pretended sleep."

"What does it mean sunlight weeps in your door
Like an abandoned child?"

"—It means the heavyhanded storm,
Whirling and ploughing the wet woods,
Has filled with terrible speech
The stone doors of my feast:

The feast of the false Saint Jason's first Communion.

THE MESSENGER

There is some sentry at the rim of winter
Fed with the speech the wind makes
In the grand belfries of the sleepless timber.

He understands the lasting strife of tears,
And the way the world is strung;
He waits to warn all life with the tongue of
 March's bugle,
Of the coming of the warrior sun.

When spring has garrisoned up her army of water,
A million grasses leave their tents, and stand in rows
To see their invincible brother.
Mending the winter's ruins with their laughter,
The flowers go out to their undestructive wars.

Walk in the woods and be witnesses,
You, the best of these poor children.

When Gabriel hit the bright shore of the world,
Yours were the eyes saw some
Star-sandalled stranger walk like lightning down
 the air,
The morning the Mother of God
Loved and dreaded the message of an angel.

THE REGRET

When cold November sits among the reeds like an
unlucky fisher

And ducks drum up as sudden as the wind
Out of the rushy river,
We slowly come, robbed of our rod and gun,
Walking amid the stricken cages of the trees.

The stormy weeks have all gone home like drunken
hunters,
Leaving the gates of the grey world wide open
to December.
But now there is no speech of branches in these
broken jails.
Acorns lie over the earth, no less neglected
Than our unrecognizable regret:
And here we stand as senseless as the oaks,
As dumb as elms.

And though we seem as grave as jailers, yet did not
come to wonder
Who picked the locks of the past days, and stole
our summer.
(We are no longer listeners for curious saws, and
secret keys!)

We are indifferent to seasons,
And stand like hills, deaf.
And never hear the last of the escaping year
Go ducking through the bended branches like a leaf.

AUBADE—LAKE ERIE

When sun, light handed, sows this Indian water
With a crop of cockles,
The vines arrange their tender shadows
In the sweet leafage of an artificial France.

Awake, in the frames of windows, innocent children,
Loving the blue, sprayed leaves of childish life,
Applaud the bearded corn, the bleeding grape,
And cry:
“Here is the hay-colored sun, our marvelous cousin,
Walking in the barley,
Turning the harrowed earth to growing bread,
And splicing the sweet, wounded vine.
Lift up your hitch-hiking heads
And no more fear the fever,
You fugitives, and sleepers in the fields,
Here is the hay-colored sun!”

And when their shining voices, clean as summer,
Play, like churchbells over the field,
A hundred dusty Luthers rise from the dead
 unheeding,
Search the horizon for the gap-toothed grin of
 factories,
And grope, in the green wheat,
Toward the wood winds of the western freight.

POEM

Watching, among the rifled branches, for the sun,
our hero,
(Sing, wind, too tuneless in the slender trees)

We think about a whiter day, the marble temples
And the hills, our girls,
The even lovelier skies,
The horses of Poseidon, the lifting seas,
All grave, and clean, and wiser than the glassy
mornings.

Watching, among the colored rocks, the sea, our
happy swimmer,
(Sing, winds, more clearly on the Greek acropoli)

We think about the cries of drowners and the
shine of armor,
While the hills, our citadels,
The strict, immovable trees,
(More marble than the marching winner
Who winters in our corridors of discontent)
Grow cloudy, in the teeth of the command.

Waiting, among the rifled temples for the light,
our savior,
(Play, winds, in this too voiceless choir of columns)

We think about the whiter colonnades, the wiser city,
While the green hills, our shambles,
The burning olive gardens,
Have made the country blinder than the smoky
temples,
Louder and harsher than the foamy sea.

Waiting among the rifled branches for the sun,
our hero,
Sing, wind, too tuneless in the slender trees!

FOR MY BROTHER

Sgt. John Paul Merton, R. C. A. F.

Reported Missing in Action, 1943

Sweet brother, if I do not sleep
My eyes are flowers for your tomb;
And if I cannot eat my bread,
My fasts shall live like willows where you died.
If in the heat I find no water for my thirst,
My thirst shall turn to springs for you, poor traveller.

Where, in what desolate and smokey country,
Lies your poor body, lost and dead?
And in what landscape of disaster
Has your unhappy spirit lost its road?

Come, in my labor find a resting place
And in my sorrows lay your head,
Or rather take my life and blood
And buy yourself a better bed—
Or take my breath and take my death
And buy yourself a better rest.

When all the men of war are shot
And flags have fallen into dust,
Your cross and mine shall tell men still
Christ died on each, for both of us.

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,
And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:
The money of Whose tears shall fall
Into your weak and friendless hand,
And buy you back to your own land:
The silence of Whose tears shall fall
Like bells upon your alien tomb.
Hear them and come: they call you home.

DEATH

Where are the merchants and the money-lenders
Whose love sang in the wires between the seaports
and the inland granaries?

Is the old trader any safer than the sailor sent to drown
Crossing the world's end in a wooden schooner?

Where are the generals who sacked the sunny cities
And burned the cattle and the grain?
Or is the politician any safer in his offices
Than a soldier shot in the eye?

Take time to tremble lest you come without reflection
To feel the furious mercies of my friendship,
(Says death) because I come as quick as intuition.

Cliffs of your hangovers were never half so dizzy
as my infinite abyss:
Flesh cannot wrestle with the waters that are in
the earth,
Nor spirit rest in icy clay!

More than the momentary night of faith, to the
lost dead,
Shall be their never-ending midnight:

Yet all my power is conquered by a child's
"Hail Mary"
And all my night forever lightened by one waxen
candle!

IPHIGENIA—POLITICS

The stairs lead to the room as bleak as glass
Where fancy turns the statues.
The empty chairs are dreaming of a protocol,
The tables, of a treaty;
And the world has become a museum.

(The girl is gone,
Fled from the broken altar by the beach,
From the unholy sacrifice when calms became a
trade-wind.)

The palaces stare out from their uncurtained trouble,
And windows weep in the weak sun.
The women fear the empty upper rooms
More than the streets as grey as guns
Or the swordlight of the wide unfriendly esplanade.

Thoughts turn to salt among those shrouded chairs
Where, with knives no crueller than pens, or promises,
Took place the painless slaying of the leader's
daughter.

O, humbler than the truth she bowed her head,
And scarcely seemed, to us, to die.
But after she was killed she fled, alive, like a surprise,
Out of the glass world, to Diana's Tauris.

Then wind cheered like a hero in the tackle of the
standing ships
And hurled them bravely on the swords and lances
of the wintry sea—
While wisdom turned to salt upon the broken piers.

This is the way the ministers have killed the truth,
 our daughter,
Steps lead back into the rooms we fear to enter;
Our minds are bleaker than the hall of mirrors:

And the world has become a museum.

THE WINTER'S NIGHT

When, in the dark, the frost cracks on the window
The children awaken, and whisper.
One says the moonlight grated like a skate
Across the freezing river.
Another hears the starlight breaking like a knifeblade
Upon the silent, steelbright pond.
They say the trees are stiller than the frozen water
From waiting for a shouting light, a heavenly message.

Yet it is far from Christmas, when a star
Sang in the pane, as brittle as their innocence!
For now the light of early Lent
Glitters upon the icy step—
“We have wept letters to our patron saints,
(The children say) yet slept before they ended.”

Oh, is there in this night no sound of strings, of
singers?
None coming from the wedding, no, nor Bridegroom's
messenger?
(The sleepy virgins stir, and trim their lamps.)

The moonlight rings upon the ice as sudden as a
footstep;
Starlight clinks upon the dooryard stone, too like
a latch,
And the children are, again, awake,
And all call out in whispers to their guardian angels.

THE COMMUNION

O sweet escape! O smiling flight!
O what bright secret breaks our jails of flesh?
For we are fled, among the shining vineyards,
And ride in praises in the hills of wheat,
To find our hero, in His tents of light!
O sweet escape! O smiling flight!

O sweet escape! O smiling flight!
The vineyards break our fetters with their laughter!
Our souls walk home as quiet as skies.
The snares that death, our subtle hunter, set,
Are all undone by beams of light!
O sweet escape! O smiling flight!

O sweet escape! O smiling flight!
Unlock our dark! And let us out of night!
And set us free to go to prison in this vineyard,
(Where, in the vines, the sweet and secret sun
Works our eternal rescue into wine)
O sweet escape! O smiling flight!

We'll rob Your vines, and raid Your hills of wheat,
Until you lock us, Jcsus in Your jails of light!
O sweet escape! O smiling flight!

HOLY COMMUNION : THE CITY

“What light will, in your eyes, like an archangel,
Soon stand armed,
O you who come with looks more lowly than the
dewy valleys,
And kneel like lepers on the step of Bethlehem?

“Although we know no hills, no country rivers,
Here in the jungles of our waterpipes and iron
ladders,
Our thoughts are quieter than rivers,
Our loves are simpler than the trees,
Our prayers deeper than the sea.

“What wounds had furrowed up our dry and
fearful spirit
Until the Massbells came like rain to make them
vineyards?
“Now, brighter on our minds’ bright mountains
Than the towns of Israel,
Shall shine desire!

“O Glory, be not swift to vanish like the wine’s
slight savor,
And still lie lightly, Truth, upon our tongues,
For Grace moves, like the wind,
The armies of the wheat our secret hero!
And Faith sits in our hearts like fire,
And makes them smile like suns,

“While we come back from lovely Bethlehem
To burn down Harlem with the glad Word of
Our Saviour.”

THE VINE

When wind and winter turn our vineyard
To a bitter Calvary,
What hands come out and crucify us
Like the innocent vine?

How long will starlight weep as sharp as thorns
In the night of our desolate life?
How long will moonlight fear to free the naked
prisoner?
Or is there no deliverer?

A mob of winds, on Holy Thursday, come like
murderers
And batter the walls of our locked and terrified souls.
Our doors are down, and our defence is done.
Good Friday's rains, in Roman order,
March, with sharpest lances, up our vineyard hill.

More dreadful than St. Peter's cry
When he was being swallowed in the sea,
Cries out our anguish: "O! We are abandoned!"
When in our life we see the ruined vine
Cut open by the cruel spring,
Ploughed by the furious season!

As if we had forgotten how the whips of winter
And the cross of April
Would all be lost in one bright miracle.
For look! The vine on Calvary is bright with branches!
See how the leaves laugh in the light,
And how the whole hill smiles with flowers:

And know how all our numbered veins must run
With life, like the sweet vine, when it is full of sun.

THE EVENING OF THE VISITATION

Go, roads, to the four quarters of our quiet distance,
While you, full moon, wise queen,
Begin your evening journey to the hills of heaven,
And travel no less stately in the summer sky
Than Mary, going to the house of Zachary.

The woods are silent with the sleep of doves,
The valleys with the sleep of streams,
And all our barns are happy with peace of cattle gone
to rest.

Still wakeful, in the fields, the shocks of wheat
Preach and say prayers:
You sheaves, make all your evensongs as sweet as ours,
Whose summer world, all ready for the granary
and barn,
Seems to have seen, this day,
Into the secret of the Lord's Nativity.

Now at the fall of night, you shocks
Still bend your heads like kind and humble kings
The way you did this golden morning when you
saw God's Mother passing,
While all our windows fill and sweeten
With the mild vespers of the hay and barley.

You moon and rising stars, pour on our barns
and houses
Your gentle benedictions.
Remind us how our Mother, with far subtler and
more holy influence,

Blesses our rooves and eaves,
Our shutters, lattices and sills,
Our doors, and floors, and stairs, and rooms, and
 bedrooms,
Smiling by night upon her sleeping children:
O gentle Mary! Our lovely Mother in heaven!

IN MEMORY OF THE SPANISH POET
FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

Where the white bridge rears up its stamping arches
Proud as a colt across the clatter of the shallow river,
The sharp guitars
Have never forgotten your name.

Only the swordspeech of the cruel strings
Can pierce the minds of those who remain,
Sitting in the eyeless ruins of the houses,
The shelter of the broken wall.

A woman has begun to sing:
O music the color of olives!
Her eyes are darker than the deep cathedrals;
Her words come dressed as mourners,
In the gate of her shadowy voice,
Each with a meaning like a sheaf of seven blades!

The spires and high Giraldas, still as nails
Nailed in the four cross roads,
Watch where the song becomes the color of
carnations,
And flowers like wounds in the white dust of Spain.

(Under what crossless Calvary lie your lost bones,
Garcia Lorca?
What white Sierra hid your murder in a rocky valley?)

In the four quarters of the world, the wind is still,
And wonders at the swordplay of the fierce guitar:
The voice has turned to iron in the naked air,
More loud and more despairing than a ruined tower.

(Under what crossless Calvary lie your lost bones,
Lorca?
What white Sierra hid your murder in a rocky valley?)

THE TRAPPIST ABBEY : MATINS

(Our Lady of Gethsemani, Kentucky)

When the full fields begin to smell of sunrise
And the valleys sing in their sleep,
The pilgrim moon pours over the solemn darkness
Her waterfalls of silence,
And then departs, up the long avenue of trees.

The stars hide, in the glade, their light, like tears,
And tremble where some train runs, lost,
Baying in eastward mysteries of distance,
Where fire flares, somewhere, over a sink of cities.

Now kindle in the windows of this ladyhouse, my soul,
Your childish, clear awakeness:
Burn in the country night
Your wise and sleepless lamp.
For, from the frowning tower, the windy belfry,
Sudden the bells come, bridegrooms,
And fill the echoing dark with love and fear.

Wake in the windows of Gethsemani, my soul,
my sister,
For the past years, with smokey torches, come,
Bringing betrayal from the burning world
And bloodying the glade with pitch flame.

Wake in the cloisters of the lonely night, my soul,
my sister,
Where the apostles gather, who were, one time,
scattered,
And mourn God's blood in the place of His betrayal,
And weep with Peter at the triple cock-crow.

EVENING

Now, in the middle of the limpid evening,
The moon speaks clearly to the hill.
The wheatfields make their simple music,
Praise the quiet sky.

And down the road, the way the stars come home,
The cries of children
Play on the empty air, a mile or more,
And fall on our deserted hearing,
Clear as water.

They say the sky is made of glass,
They say the smiling moon's a bride.
They say they love the orchards and apple trees,
The trees, their innocent sisters, dressed in blossoms,
Still wearing, in the blurring dusk,
White dresses from that morning's first Communion.

And, where blue heaven's fading fire last shines
They name the new come planets
With words that flower
On little voices, light as stems of lilies.

And where blue heaven's fading fire last shines,
Reflected in the poplar's ripple,
One little, wakeful bird
Sings like a shower.

*THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
COMPARED TO A WINDOW*

Because my will is simple as a window
And knows no pride of original earth,
It is my life to die, like glass, by light:
Slain in the strong rays of the bridegroom sun.

Because my love is simple as a window
And knows no shame of original dust,
I longed all night, (when I was visible) for dawn
 my death:
When I would marry day, my Holy Spirit:
And die by transsubstantiation into light.

For light, my lover, steals my life in secret.
I vanish into day, and leave no shadow
But the geometry of my cross,
Whose frame and structure are the strength
By which I die, but only to the earth,
And am uplifted to the sky my life.

When I become the substance of my lover,
(Being obedient, sinless glass)
I love all things that need my lover's life,
And live to give my newborn Morning to your quiet
 rooms,

—Your rooms, that would be tombs,
Or vaults of night, and death, and terror,
Fill with the clarity of living Heaven,
Shine with the rays of God's Jerusalem:
O shine, bright Sions!

Because I die by brightness and the Holy Spirit,
The sun rejoices in your jail, my kneeling Christian,
(Where even now you weep and grin
To learn, from my simplicity, the strength of faith.)

Therefore do not be troubled at the judgments of
the thunder,
Stay still and pray, still stay, my other son,
And do not fear the armies and black ramparts
Of the advancing and retreating rains:
I'll let no lightning kill your room's white order.

Although it is the day's last hour,
Look with no fear:
For the torn storm lets in, at the world's rim,
Three streaming rays as straight as Jacob's ladder:

And you shall see the sun, my Son, by Substance,
Come to convince the world of the day's end, and
of the night,
Smile to the lovers of the day in smiles of blood:
For through my love, He'll be their Brother,
My light—the Lamb of their Apocalypse.

DIRGE FOR THE PROUD WORLD

Where is the marvelous thief
Who stole harvests from the angry sun
And sacked, with his bright sight, the land?

Where he lies dead, the quiet earth unpacks him
And wind is waving in the earth's revenge:
Fields of barley, oats and rye.

Where is the millionaire
Who squandered the bright spring?
Whose lies played in the summer evening sky
Like cheap guitars?
Who spent the golden fortunes of the fall
And died as bare as a tree?

His heart lies open like a treasury,
Filled up with grass, and generous flowers.

Where is the crazy gambler
Amid the nickels of whose blood have fallen
Heavy half-dollars of his last of life?
Where is he gone?

The burning bees come walk, as bright as jewels
Upon that flowering, dark sun:
The bullet wound in his unmoving lung.

Oh you who hate the gambler or his enemy,
Remember how the bees
Pay visits to the patient dead
And borrow honey from their charitable blood.

You who have judged the gambler or his enemy
Remember this, before the proud world's funeral.

THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

You senses, never still, but shrill as children,
Become more humble and more low:
Learn adoration, where our secret life,
Our Corpus Christi,
Here lives uplifted in His golden window.

Eyes, in your murky night, know new simplicity.
Your ears and iron voices, leave your wars.
Hands, have one action more: wash yourselves
clean, and then be still.

And all you senses, waiting here, reborn by water,
Stay wakeful in these joyful attitudes,
Attentive to the wheat our holy Stranger:
He is bright heaven's open door.

Look where the Lamb bends all His brightness
Low as our dim and puny lights
Although His fleece is full of sun.
Not all the universe can comprehend
His glory's equal, nor His light's,
Who loves us so, He won't outshine our winking
candles!

Be kindled, intellect, although your strongest lamps
are night-lights
By the beams of this wonderful Sun!
Created wisdom makes at best a metal monstrance
for His crown,

And those stiff rays look like no living light:
They are no more than golden spikes, and golden
thorns!

But where is reason at the Lamb's bright feast?
Reason and knowledge have bought oxen and they
cannot come.

Thrift and prudence give their own excuses,
And justice has a wife, and must stay home.

To the cold corners of the earth rise up and go:
Find beggar Faith, and bring him to the holy table.
He shall sit down among the good Apostles,
And weep with Peter at the washing of the feet.

His bread shall be the smiles of Pity's human face:
He'll eat, and live with God, at least in longing,
ever after:

His wine shall be the mortal blood of Mercy,
Love and Peace:
And, having drunk, he'll hear the martyr's joyful
laughter.

ARIADNE AT THE LABYRINTH

Patient, in the fire of noon,
Hands, that hold the thread, crossed,
Ariadne's a Barbadian flower,
And grows by the Labyrinth door.

Under the blue, airy-waters of evening,
Hands folded like white petals,
Watching for the bold adventurer,
Ariadne waits as calm as coral,
Silent as some plant of undersea.

Drums ring at the city's edge:
The speechless hills put on crowns of dark flame;
Dancing citizens fly like little flags
Amid the glad volcano of their congas.
But Ariadne's eyes are lakes
Beside the maze's starwhite wall:

For in the Carribbean midnight
Of her wild and gentle wisdom, she foreknows
And solves the maze's cruel algebra.

But when white morning
Runs with a shout along the jagged mountains
Strength of a cotton thread draws out to Ariadne
The Bravest Soldier, the Wisest Judge,
The Mightiest King!

AN ARGUMENT—OF THE
PASSION OF CHRIST

*"And what one of you, by taking thought, can add to his
stature one cubit?"* ST. MATTHEW, vi. 27

I

The furious prisoner of the womb,
Rebellious, in the jaws of life,
Learns, from the mother's conscious flesh,
The secret laws of blood and strife.

The demon raging at the breast,
Arrayed in cries, and crowned with tears,
Has sucked the magics of the east,
The doubts of the philosophers.

In the red straits of his arteries,
Love runs, lost and ravening;
Nothingness feeds upon itself
And swells up to a mighty king!

Wit walks out, in envy's mask;
Love will hide, and be a lecher.
Adultery, by taking thought,
Adds a cubit to his stature,

Until we scan the wastes of death,
And wind blows through our cage of bones;
Sight leaves the sockets of the skull,
And love runs mad among the stones!

II

The worm that watched within the womb
 Was standing guard at Jesus' tomb,
 And my first angry, infant breath
 Stood wakeful, lest He rise from death.
 My adolescence, like the wolf,
 Fled to the edges of the gulf
 And searched the ruins of the night
 To hide from Calvary's iron light:
 But in the burning jaws of day
 I saw the barren Judas Tree;
 For, to the caverns of my pride
 Judas had come, and there was paid!

III

Seeds of the three hours' agony
 Fell on good earth, and grew from me,
 And, cherished by my sleepless cares
 Flowered with God's Blood, and Mary's tears.
 My curious love found its reward
 When Love was scourged in Pilate's yard:
 Here was the work my hands had made:
 A thorny crown, to cut His head.
 The growth of thoughts that made me great
 Lay on His cross, and were its weight;
 And my desires lay, turned to stones,
 And where He fell, cut to the bone.
 The sharpnesses of my delight
 Were spikes run through His hands and feet,
 And from the sweetness of my will
 Their sponge drew vinegar and gall.

The cry that rent the temple veil
And split the earth as deep as hell
And echoed through the universe,
Sounds, in bombardments, down to us.
There is no ear that has not heard
The deathless cry of murdered God:
No eye that has not looked upon
The lance of the crucifixion:
And yet that cry beats at the ears
Of old, deaf-mute interpreters,
Whose querulous and feeble cries
Drown stronger voices, and whose eyes
Will let no light of lances in:
They still will clamor for a sign!

ST. AGNES—A RESPONSORY

Cujus pulchritudinem

Sol et luna mirantur . . .

Hear with what joy this child of God
Plays in the perfect garden of her martyrdom,
Ipsi soli servo fidem.

Spending the silver of her little life
To bring her Bridegroom these bright flowers
Of which her arms are full.

Cujus pulchritudinem . . .

With what white smiles
She buys the Popes their palliums,
And lavishes upon our souls the lambs of her
confession!

Sol et luna mirantur,

Ipsi soli servo fidem.

Her virtues, with their simple strings,
Play to the Lover hidden in the universe,

Cujus pulchritudinem . . .

Who smiles into the sun His looking glass,
And fills it with His glorious face:
Who utters the round moon's recurring O
And drowns our dusks in peace.

Ipsi soli servo fidem.

The Roman captain's work is done:
Now he may tear his temples down—
Her charity has flown to four horizons, like the
swiftest doves,

Where all towns sing like springtime, with their
newborn bells

Pouring her golden name out of their crucibles.

THE HOLY CHILD'S SONG

When midnight occupied the porches of the Poet's
reason
Sweeter than any bird
He heard the Holy Child.

SONG

"When My kind Father, kinder than the sun,
With looks and smiles bends down
And utters My bodily life,
My flesh, obeying, praises Heaven like a smiling cloud.
Then I become the laughter of the watercourses.
I am the gay wheatfields, the serious hills:
I fill the sky with words of light, and My incarnate
songs
Fly in and out the branches of My childish voice
Like thrushes in a tree.

"And when My Mother, pretty as a church,
Takes Me upon her lap, I laugh with love,
Loving to live in her flesh, which is My house—
and full of light!
(Because the sky My Spirit enters in at all the
windows)
O, then what songs and what incarnate joys
Dance in the bright rays of My childish voice!

"In winter when the birds put down their flutes
And wind plays sharper than a fife upon the
icy rain,
I sit in this crib,
And laugh like fire, and clap My golden hands:

To view my friends the timid beasts——
Their great brown flanks, muzzles and milky
breath!

“Therefore come, shepherds, from your rocky hill,
And bend about My crib in wonder and adore My joy.
My glances are as good as wine.
The little rivers of My smile
Will wash away all ruins from your eyes,
As I lift up My hands,
As white as blackthorn blossoms,
And charm and kiss you with My seven Sacraments.

“This seeming winter is your spring
When skies put off their armor:
Because my Heart already holds
The secret mortal wound,
By which I shall transform all deserts into garden-
ground:
And there the peaceful trees,
All day say credos, being full of leaves——
And I will come and be your noon-day sun,
And make your shadows palaces of moving light:
And you will show Me your flowers.”

When midnight occupied the porches of the Poet's
reason
Sweeter than any bird
He heard the Holy Child.

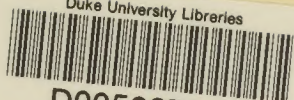
THE SPONGE FULL OF VINEGAR

When Romans gambled in the clash of lancelight,
Dicing amid the lightnings for the unsewn mantle,
Thirst burned crimson, like a crosswise firebird
Even in the eyes of dying Christ.
But the world's gall, and all its rotten vinegar
Reeked in the sponge, flamed on His swollen mouth,
And all was paid in poison, in the taste of our feasts!

O Lord! When I lie breathless in Thy churches
Knowing it is Thy glory goes again
Torn from the wise world in the daily thundercrack
of Massbells,
I drink new fear from the four clean prayers I ever
gave Thee!
For even the Word of Thy Name, caught from
Thy grace,
And offered up out of my deepest terror,
Goes back gallsavored of flesh.
Even the one good sacrifice,
The thirst of heaven, comes to Thee: vinegar!
Reeks of the death-thirst manlife found in the
forbidden apple.

A
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